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MERRY ENGLAND.

MERRY ENGLAND:

OR,

NOBLES AND SERFS.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH,

AUTHOR OF
"THE TOWER OF LONDON," "BOSCOBEL," ETC.

"In order that gentlemen and others may take example and correct wicked rebels, I will most amply detail how this business was conducted."

FROISSART.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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BOOK III.—*continued.*

BLACKHEATH.

MERRY ENGLAND;

OR,

NOBLES AND SERFS.

V.

ELTHAM PALACE IS SURRENDERED TO THE REBELS.

BY this time the sun had risen, and with a splendour that gave assurance of a glorious day.

Roused by the enlivening beams, the whole host was speedily astir. Where all had been silent as the grave a short time before, thousands of voices were now heard.

On returning to his tent, Wat Tyler mounted his steed, and accompanied by

Conrad Basset and Frideswide, both of whom were on horseback, began to inspect the host.

Descrying John Ball at a distance, he joined him, and found that he was about to preach to the assemblage.

Externally the monk was unchanged. He was still a barefooted friar—still wore a grey gown and tied a cord round his waist.

He had brought with him a portable pulpit from Rochester, and this pulpit, which was more than twenty feet high, being placed in a convenient spot, he quitted his mule and ascended it, while Wat Tyler, and those with him, stationed themselves below.

From this elevated stage the monk could survey the whole host, and he looked around for a few minutes till a general silence prevailed, and then commenced his discourse.

Possessing a stentorian voice, he made himself heard at a considerable distance, and as he justified the proceedings of the insurgents, he was listened to with attention, and even applauded.

At the close of his sermon, he called on the assemblage to join in prayer; and the injunction being reiterated in every direction, the entire host knelt down.

Nothing could be more striking than the spectacle afforded by the vast kneeling multitude; but the effect of a hymn, subsequently sung, and in which thousands of rude, untutored voices joined, was sublime.

Having finished their devotions, the peasants began to prepare for their morning meal, and numerous fires were lighted, at which provisions were cooked.

Meanwhile the leaders proceeded to the tent in which Sir John de Newtoun was confined; but having satisfied themselves

that he was safe, they did not care to question him.

A conference was then held between Wat Tyler and the monk, and some changes were made consequent upon the departure of the Outlaw.

Conrad Basset was appointed to the command of a battalion, and Hothbrand had a similar command bestowed upon him by Wat Tyler, who promoted all his own favourites.

It must be mentioned that a strong feeling of jealousy had arisen of late between the two rebel chiefs, and Wat Tyler by no means regretted the absence of one whom he had begun to regard as a rival.

So much had to be done, and so many delays occurred, that two or three hours elapsed before the army was ready to march.

At length, however, it set forth.

Ill-disciplined, tumultuous, and scarcely

to be controlled by its leaders, the host was imposing from its magnitude.

Though no halt took place in Dartford, and though the men marched quickly, upwards of an hour elapsed between the appearance of the head of the first division on the brow of the hill, and the descent of the last battalion.

The men were armed, as we have previously stated, with every description of weapon—scythes, flails, and reaping-hooks included; but gisarmes, long pikes, and brown bills predominated. Banners of St. George and pennons were borne by each company.

Wat Tyler rode at the head of the army, and no noble could have assumed a haughtier deportment than did the rebel leader. He scarcely deigned to notice the respectful salutations of the villagers, and responded with a proud gesture to Baldock's profound obeisance.

However, he gave strict orders that the Priory was not to be injured; and while he placed a guard at the gates to enforce obedience to his commands, his wife rushed forth, and endeavoured to throw herself at his feet, but she was kept back.

The onward march of the insurgents was characterized by its customary atrocities. Several habitations were plundered at Crayford and Bexley, and their owners put to death.

Although Wat Tyler had told his brother chief that he would not stay to besiege Eltham Palace, he sent Conrad Basset to summon the garrison to surrender, threatening to put them to the sword if they refused.

Anticipating a determined resistance, the young leader was greatly surprised when the demand was complied with.

On the very first summons the gates

were thrown open, and Conrad, accompanied by Frideswide, rode into the court with a large force, and took possession of the place.

It then appeared that only a very slender garrison was left there; Sir Eustace de Valletort, and all the other knights and esquires with him, having received orders from the King to join him, without delay, at the Tower.

The satisfactory intelligence was instantly conveyed to Wat Tyler, who had halted, with his division of the army, in the park; and he at once repaired to the palace.

Deeming that a royal residence would tend to further his ambitious schemes, he took immediate measures to prevent the place from being plundered or destroyed; and feeling he could rely upon Conrad to carry out his injunctions, he committed the charge of the palace to him.

Everything now seemed propitious to the

rebel leader. He had got rid of a rival, who might have offered dangerous opposition to his plans, and he had possession of a palace, wherein he might execute his designs.

Moreover, the sudden flight of Sir Eustace de Valletort and the knights proved conclusively that the royal party were full of alarm.

Before leaving the palace, and conducting his army to Blackheath, where the camp was to be formed, Wat Tyler sent for Sir John de Newtoun, and received him with all the haughtiness of a monarch in the great banqueting-hall.

Seated in a regal chair, with Conrad and Frideswide standing behind him, the rebel leader thus addressed the captive knight, who regarded him with looks full of wrath, being highly indignant at the surrender of the palace:—

"I am about to send thee to the Tower

as my messenger to the King. On thy honour and life thou wilt return with his Majesty's answer, be it what it may?"

"I have already said it," replied the knight, sternly. "What wouldst thou have me state to the King?"

"First, thou wilt tell him that his royal manor of Eltham is in my hands. Add thereunto that if my demands be not conceded, I will next seize the Tower!"

"That menace will be derided!" rejoined Sir John, scornfully. "With all thy host, thou wilt never take the Tower!"

"Three days ago," said Wat Tyler, "thou wouldst have declared that Rochester Castle was impregnable—yet I took it!"

"The castle was betrayed," cried Sir John. "But to thy message."

"Say to the King that he ought not to regard me as an enemy," rejoined Wat. "All I have done has been in his service."

"This is mere mockery!" cried the knight. "I will bear no such message."

"Ever since the young King's accession to the throne," continued Wat, "the realm has been infamously governed. Not by his Majesty, but by his uncles and the Council. They must be dismissed. The commonalty have been grievously wronged by the nobles and the clergy. There shall be no nobles —no clergy. Moreover, the Archbishop of Canterbury must render a strict account of his ministry as Chancellor."

"To whom?" demanded Sir John.

"To me," replied Wat Tyler. "Tell the King I have much to lay before him which I cannot confide to thee. I must confer with him alone."

"That can never be," rejoined Sir John.

"Deliver my message, nevertheless," said Wat Tyler. "Mark well my words: I alone can save the King from the peril in

which he is placed. Without my help he may lose his crown."

So much significance was given by the rebel leader to the latter part of his speech, that Sir John could not help pondering upon it.

"The interview can take place here," pursued Wat Tyler, after a brief pause; "but it must be in private."

"And think you his Majesty will trust himself with you?" exclaimed Sir John. "Your folly and audacity astound me!"

"He will be safer with me than with his uncles," rejoined the rebel leader. "But I will consent that the Princess, his mother, shall be present at the interview."

Whatever he thought of this proposition, Sir John made no remark, but contented himself with saying—

"I will deliver thy message to his Majesty."

"That is all I require from thee," rejoined Wat Tyler. "Thou wilt bring me an answer to Blackheath, where I shall be with my army."

Then turning to Conrad, he added, "Let him be taken by a strong guard to Greenwich. There let a boat be procured to convey him at once to the Tower."

Thereupon Sir John de Newtoun withdrew, accompanied by Conrad, who presently returned, having given the necessary directions respecting him.

Wat Tyler then quitted the palace, and took Frideswide with him, knowing he could trust her to convey secret messages to Conrad.

When the insurgents emerged from the park, Blackheath lay before them, and they had only to descend the woody slopes to reach the extensive plain.

Like Editha, Wat Tyler paused for a

moment to gaze at the great city in the distance, but with far different emotions.

Unable to repress his exultation, he raised himself in his saddle, and, stretching out his hand towards the distant structures, exclaimed aloud, caring not that his words were overheard by Frideswide, who was close behind him—

"That city will soon be mine!"

He then rode down the hill-side, and was followed by the multitude.

Never before, never since, has Blackheath beheld a host like that gathered upon it then. Never was wilder excitement than the insurgents displayed when they first caught sight of London.

As each company reached the brow of the hill, the men gave a great shout, and then rushed headlong down, spreading tumultuously over the plain.

When all had descended, a muster took

place, and it was then found, as nearly as could be computed, that they numbered ninety thousand.

This, with the division stationed at Eltham, and the Essex army, commanded by the Outlaw, raised the insurgent forces to nearly a hundred thousand men.

Well might Wat Tyler deem such a force irresistible.

Immediately after the muster, and before the vast assemblage could disperse, John Ball caused his lofty pulpit to be reared in the midst of them, and commenced one of his fiery harangues.

He told his listeners, who were attentive as ever, that their march was over—that they were at the gates of the doomed city, and had only to enter and destroy all nobles and wicked-doers within it, and seize upon the wealth which had been wrung from the people.

"Nineveh was a great city," he said, "an exceeding great and proud city, but it was not spared. Neither shall great and proud London be spared, by reason of its iniquities!"

The fierce and terrific shout that arose at the close of his address, and seemed to shake the vault above, showed that all who heard him were ready to execute his orders.

VI.

SIR JOHN HOLLAND IS REPRIMANDED.

THE utmost consternation prevailed among the loyal and wealthy citizens of London when it became known that the royal palace of Eltham was occupied by the rebels—that ninety thousand Kentish peasants, under the command of Wat Tyler, were quartered on Blackheath—that another large army of Essex men, commanded by the redoubted Outlaw, was encamped on Hampstead Heath—in a word, that the City was completely invested, and that no reinforcements could be obtained from any quarter.

Nothing daunted by this alarming intelligence, and by the knowledge he had

acquired that there were upwards of thirty thousand persons in the City favourable to the rebel cause, Sir William Walworth caused the gates of London Bridge to be closed and strongly guarded, shut all the City gates, and got together a great number of valiant and notable burgesses and men-at-arms, on whose loyalty he could depend.

Meanwhile, active preparations were made for the defence of the Tower by Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort, to whom the command of the royal fortress was entrusted.

The garrison having been somewhat reinforced, now consisted of six hundred men-at-arms, and the like number of archers; but still the two experienced commanders, and almost all the nobles and knights with them, were full of anxiety, because they feared that some of the men were inclined to take part with the rebels.

The only person apparently free from uneasiness at this critical juncture was the young King. Whether his indifference was affected or not, it sorely displeased the two commanders, who rebuked him; but he answered their reprimands with great petulance.

"I shall not feign an alarm I do not feel," he said. "What can I do? You take measures for the defence of the Tower without consulting me; and you are right, since I am inexperienced."

"My liege," said Sir Eustace de Valletort, gravely, "your indifference has an ill effect on the soldiers."

"It ought to cheer them, because it proves that I do not despair of success," said the King. "It will be time enough to look despondent when we are beaten."

"I hope we shall not be beaten, my

liege," said Sir Eustace. "Nevertheless, we must be prepared for the worst."

"I am prepared for whatever may happen," said Richard. "But 'tis useless to continue this discourse. Should you think fit to consult me on any matter, you will find me with the Princess."

Raising the tapestry that masked a side door, he proceeded towards his mother's apartments.

As he went out his councillors regarded each other with an indefinite expression, wherein anger and grief were blended.

"Why should we strive to preserve his crown, since he values not?" cried Sir Simon, bitterly.

"Nay, we must not desert him now," rejoined Sir Eustace. "But I would that some of his ill-advisers were removed."

Just as the words were uttered, Sir John Holland entered the room.

"I thought the King was here," he exclaimed, looking round.

"His Majesty has just gone to the Princess's apartments," replied Sir Simon.

"I will follow him thither," cried the young noble.

"Stay, my lord," said Sir Eustace. "I would fain have a word with you."

Something in Sir Eustace's tone displeased the young noble excessively; but he stopped.

"My lord," said Eustace, bluntly, "I pray you to excuse what I am about to say. I should be well pleased if you did not hold so much light and frivolous discourse with his Majesty. 'Tis out of place at this juncture."

"I am of the same opinion, my lord," added Sir Simon Burley, with equal bluntness. "Such levity is ill-timed. Avoid it, I pray you."

"'Sdeath!" exclaimed Sir John, fiercely. "Am I to be tutored by you, my lords? Am I to ask you in what terms I must address the King, my brother? I trow not!"

"If you are really devoted to the King, my lord," said Sir Eustace, "and desire to maintain his authority, you will not divert his thoughts from the serious matters that demand his consideration, by follies and frivolities. If you cannot or will not do this, 'twere best you left the Tower!"

"How?" exclaimed the young noble. "Leave the Tower?"

"Such is my order, as one of the Council!" said Sir Simon.

"And think you I will obey the order?" cried Sir John, furiously.

"You must!" rejoined Sir Simon, sternly. "I am chief in authority here, and I deem your presence highly prejudicial to the

King! Unless you exercise greater discretion, I will send you hence, and some others with you!"

"You dare not do it, Sir Simon!" cried the haughty young nobleman, inflamed with rage.

"Retract those expressions, my lord, or I will order your instant arrest!" said Sir Simon.

Infuriated as he was, Sir John felt he could not brave the Councillor's authority. He therefore forced himself to say he had been too hasty; but without waiting to see whether his apology was accepted, he raised the arras and passed out, as the King had done.

VII.

THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE KING AND SIR JOHN HOLLAND.

IN an ante-chamber which communicated with his mother's apartments, Richard found Editha.

She was alone, and stationed in the deep recess of a bay-window, that looked upon the palace garden, and upon the broad river, flowing past the outer walls of the fortress. So pre-occupied was she, that she did not notice the King's entrance.

In this pensive attitude she looked so charming, that Richard remained riveted to the spot.

Already, the charms of the lovely damsel had made an impression upon his youthful

heart, very different from any he had previously experienced. Although he had fancied himself in love with various Court damsels, who had spread their lures for him, he had never been touched so sensibly as by Editha's simple graces.

The novel sensation of being really in love, surprised, and perhaps did not altogether please him; but the very efforts he made to overcome the growing passion increased it.

As yet he had breathed no word of love to the fair damsel; but his ardent looks had revealed the state of his feelings as plainly as if he had given utterance to them.

And how was Editha affected by the discovery she had made, that the King was enamoured of her? Alas! she discovered, at the same time, that she loved him.

To indulge such a passion she knew

would be fatal to her, and she strove to stifle it. In vain; it over-mastered her.

She was thinking of the King as she looked out of the bay-window at the garden and the river; and when she turned and beheld him, she uttered a slight cry.

"Surely I do not alarm you!" he said, advancing towards her, and taking her hand.

"I was startled at the moment," she replied. "I knew not your Majesty was in the room."

"I had been here for a few moments," he said. "I was looking at you; thinking how beautiful—how very beautiful you are!"

"Oh, my liege!" she exclaimed, blushing deeply.

"I adore you, Editha!" he cried, passionately. "You must be mine! I cannot live without you!"

"My liege, I implore you," she exclaimed, attempting to withdraw her hand; but he retained it.

"Editha," he cried, "I never loved till I beheld you, and I can love no other as I love you! You are my life—my soul! I cannot exist without you!"

"I pray you let me go, my liege!" she cried, trembling. "I must not listen to such words from you!"

"Nay, by my faith I will not release you, Editha, till you promise to requite my love."

"It would be sinful in me to make any such promise, my liege. I can never be your bride, and other than your bride I will never be. That no one has ever inspired me with such feelings as I entertain for your Majesty I will own."

"Then you confess you love me?" cried Richard.

"I could not behold your Majesty unmoved," she rejoined. "But our Blessed Mother will give me strength to conquer my feelings. I will die rather than swerve from my duty. Suffer me, I implore you, to retire."

But the King would not relinquish her hand. Abashed by his ardent gaze, she cast down her eyes.

Just then the door communicating with the corridor opened, and Sir John Holland came in.

He started on beholding the King and Editha standing together in the bay-window, and turned very pale.

"Pass on, my lord!" cried Richard, seeing he felt inclined to pause.

But, to the King's surprise and displeasure, Sir John came forward, and, controlling himself as well as he could, said—

"Your Majesty may not be aware that I have a prior claim to this damsel."

"A prior claim?" ejaculated Richard, looking at her.

"'Tis false!" cried Editha, indignantly. "He is hateful to me. I pray your Majesty to deliver me from his further persecutions."

"Reassure yourself, fair damsel," said the King. "He shall trouble you no more."

But the young noble, who stood in very little awe of his royal brother, rejoined, in a half-defiant tone, "I do not intend to resign her, even to your Majesty."

"Presume not too much on my good nature," said Richard.

And he signed to him to leave the room.

But Sir John Holland did not obey.

"This damsel is mine, I repeat," he said. "If I go, she shall come with me."

"Do not let him approach me, my liege,"

implored Editha, clinging to the King for protection.

"Back, on thy life!" exclaimed Richard, drawing his sword, as his brother advanced.

"By St. Paul! I will have her, if I take her by force!" cried the young noble, drawing likewise.

Fearing some terrible catastrophe might occur if this unnatural quarrel were carried further, Editha threw herself between the brothers.

For a moment they glared fiercely at each other, but no blow was struck, when Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort suddenly entered.

Amazed at the sight they beheld, they both rushed forward, and seizing Sir John Holland, instantly disarmed him.

"Are you mad, my lord, that you dare to raise your hand against the King?" cried Sir Eustace. "Know you not that you

have placed your life in jeopardy by the rash act?"

Sir John made no reply.

Sir Simon flew to the door; and calling the guard, ordered them to arrest the young noble.

This was done.

"Take him to the Beauchamp Tower," added Sir Simon; "and let him be confined in a prison-chamber."

"Must this be, my liege?" cried Sir John.

Fearing the King might relent, Sir Eustace interposed.

"My liege," he said, "the offence is too serious to be passed without punishment."

Thus admonished, Richard turned away, and his brother was removed.

As he was taken forth, Sir Eustace remarked to Editha, "I must look to you for an explanation of this scene."

"I am the unfortunate cause of it," she replied. "The quarrel was concerning me."

"I feared as much," said the knight, in an undertone. "You have but escaped one danger to fall into another. You love the King?"

"Alas! yes!" she ejaculated. "Yet fear me not."

"One person alone can protect you—the Princess," said Sir Eustace. "Go to her at once. Tell her all."

"I will," replied Editha, earnestly.

And she quitted the room unperceived by the King, who was conversing with Sir Simon in the bay-window.

Scarcely was she gone than the Lieutenant of the Tower entered from the corridor. His looks proclaimed that he brought important tidings.

"My liege," he said, with an obeisance to the King, "Sir John de Newtoun, some-

while Constable of Rochester Castle, has just arrived at the Tower. He is the bearer of a message from the rebel leader, Wat Tyler, and craves an audience of your Majesty. Will it please you to receive him?"

"Ay, marry, good Master Lieutenant," replied the King. "I am curious to hear this insolent knave's message. Sir John hath been a prisoner of the rebels ever since they left Rochester, as I understand. How hath he been treated by them?"

"He does not complain of ill-treatment, my liege," replied the Lieutenant. "But he says he hath been compelled to pledge his word to the rebel leader to bring back an answer from your Majesty."

"He shall have answer; but it must be well considered," replied the King. "Call a Council forthwith in the great chamber in the White Tower, and summon to it his

Grace of Canterbury, the Lord Treasurer, and the other lords. When they are assembled, we will hear Sir John de Newtoun's message. 'Tis a grave matter, and must be gravely discussed."

"I am glad to hear your Majesty say so," cried Sir Simon, approvingly. "Act up to the counsel of those devoted to you, and you will have nothing to fear."

The Lieutenant then departed, to execute the King's behests.

"'Tis meet the Princess should hear the message, my liege," said Sir Simon. "Her advice is ever judicious. Shall we solicit her Highness's attendance?"

"Nay; I will go to her myself," said Richard. "Come with me, I pray you."

Followed by the two commanders, he proceeded to his mother's apartment.

VIII.

HOW SIR JOHN DE NEWTOUN DELIVERED WAT TYLER'S MESSAGE TO THE KING.

IN that unrivalled chamber in the uppermost story of the White Tower, wherein royal councils had been constantly held since the days of William Rufus, an audience was given by the King to Sir John de Newtoun.

Stretched from pillar to pillar on either side of the immense apartment, heavy curtains of arras materially diminished its width, but heightened its splendour.

Men-at-arms thronged the galleries; halberdiers were stationed at the principal entrance of the council-chamber; and ushers,

pages, and various officers of the household were assembled within.

Beneath a canopy of state at the upper end of the room, and on raised chairs, sat the King and the Princess, his mother.

On his Majesty's right were placed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord of St. John's, the Baron de Vertain, and the Baron de Gommegines.

On the left, and near the Princess, sat Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Namur, and Sir Henry de Sauselles.

The whole assemblage looked extraordinarily grave, and Richard had never before worn an aspect so serious.

None of his light companions, who made a jest of everything, were present—Sir John Holland, as we know, being confined in the Beauchamp Tower.

As soon as the King and the Council were seated, Sir John de Newtoun was

ushered in ceremoniously by the Lieutenant.

After Sir John had made a profound obeisance to the King, who received him very graciously, he said, in accents that plainly bespoke his trouble—

"My gracious liege, I received the honour of knighthood from that flower of English chivalry, the very redoubted prince, your father. Ever loyal and faithful to your illustrious grandsire, Edward III., I have ever been loyal and devoted to yourself. What, then, must be my feelings, when I am forced to bear a message to your Majesty from villains who have taken up arms against you? I deserve to be thrust from your royal presence with scorn. And if you send me back unheard, to be put to an ignominious death by those rebels and traitors, I cannot complain. Return I must! My word, never yet broken, is

pledged to the rebel leader, and my wife and children are detained by him as hostages."

"Rise, good Sir John," cried Richard, much touched at his affection. "Deliver your message without fear. However deep may be our displeasure with these presumptuous rebels, we hold you excused."

"My liege," said Sir John, much relieved by the assurance, "I must again pray you to hold me excused, if I employ language that may sound disrespectful. But I have no option. Wat Tyler, the leader of the rebellious peasants, hath sent me as his ambassador to request that your Majesty will come to Eltham Palace—now, alas! in the arch-rebel's hands—to confer with him on various matters."

"Go to him!" cried Richard, angrily, while indignant murmurs arose from the whole Council. "Doth the insolent knave expect compliance on our part?"

"He does, my liege," replied Sir John. "He has the audacity to demand that the conference between your Majesty and himself shall take place in private. He will not allow any of your Council to be present."

Fresh murmurs arose from Sir Simon Burley and the others.

"The reason he assigns for this outrageous demand, my liege," continued Sir John, "is that he has certain propositions to make which can only be discussed by your Majesty and himself. Should your Majesty agree to the interview—as he doubts not you will—he will send a sufficient guard to conduct you from Greenwich to Eltham, and will guarantee your safety."

"And doth the madman imagine that we, the guardians of the King, would allow his Majesty to place himself in the hands of such a miscreant?" cried Sir Simon.

"I would not for a moment advise any

such insane step as that proposed," observed Sir John; "but I am bound to say that I do not think that Wat Tyler meditates treachery."

"I should not fear to hold a conference with him," said Richard.

"'Tis a snare to get you into his power, my liege!" cried the Princess. "Think not he would keep faith with you!"

All the Council were of the same opinion.

"If your Majesty really desires to have an interview with Wat Tyler," said Sir Eustace de Valletort, "it can be managed in this way, but in no other, without danger to yourself. Send a message by Sir John de Newtoun that you will meet him at your manor of Rotherhithe to-morrow morning. Descend the river in your barge, and, on arriving at the appointed spot, keep close to the shore. On seeing your Majesty approach, the rebel leader, attended only by

Sir John de Newtoun, can ride up to the bank, and the conference can take place. Sir John will keep strict watch upon Wat Tyler's movements, and, at a sign from him, the barge can be instantly rowed off."

"We like the plan," rejoined Richard. And no objection being raised to it by the Council, he added to Sir John de Newtoun, "Take back our answer to Wat Tyler. Tell him he must come forward unarmed, and attended only by you. He may do so without fear. We will descend the river in our barge to-morrow morn. If we find him not at Rotherhithe, we shall forthwith return."

"I will deliver your message, my liege," said Sir John; "but I doubt if the presumptuous knave will be satisfied. He is so puffed up with success, that he fancies he can dictate terms to your Majesty. Should he not appear at Rotherhithe, the fault will not be mine."

"Understand this, Sir John," said Sir Simon Burley, "though it forms no part of your answer to Wat Tyler: the whole of the Council will attend the King to Rotherhithe. They do not desire to take any part in the conference; but since they are responsible for his Majesty's safety, they cannot allow him to leave the Tower without them."

All the Council concurred in this opinion.

"I trust I may be allowed to accompany the King, and take one of my damsels with me?" said the Princess.

"Undoubtedly, your Grace," replied Sir Simon.

"Who is to be left in command of the Tower during your absence?" demanded Richard.

"The Lieutenant. We can perfectly confide in him," rejoined Sir Simon.

The King signified his approval; and all

being settled, Sir John de Newtoun took leave.

He was conducted by the Lieutenant to the private stairs at St. Thomas's Tower, where his boat awaited him.

Crossing the river, he made the best of his way to Blackheath; and, being provided with a pass, he had no difficulty in penetrating through the rebel host to the tent of the leader.

IX.

SIR LIONEL DE COURCY AND HIS DAUGHTER ARE BROUGHT PRISONERS TO ELTHAM.

ON flying from Canterbury, Sir Lionel de Courcy had proceeded with his daughter, and all his servants and retainers, to a large mansion which he possessed in the neighbourhood of Maidstone.

Two days after his arrival, he was attacked by a large party of insurgent peasantry, and, after an obstinate defence, his retainers were put to the sword, and the old knight and his lovely daughter were carried off as prisoners, and delivered to Wat Tyler at Blackheath, to be dealt with as the rebel leader might deem fit.

Aware of the outrage inflicted upon Conrad Basset by Sir Lionel, and being willing to afford the young rebel commander an opportunity of avenging the wrong done him, Wat Tyler refused all offers of ransom, and sent the captive knight and his daughter to Eltham, under the charge of Frideswide and a guard.

As neither Sir Lionel nor Catherine had been told that Conrad was commander of the rebel garrison quartered at the palace, they were greatly astonished when brought into his presence, and the old knight was struck with dismay.

Guarded by Frideswide, who marched beside them with a two-handed sword on her shoulder, they were led to the great banqueting-hall, where Conrad was seated in a royal chair.

On beholding him, Catherine cast down her eyes; but Conrad hardly looked at her.

With a feeling of gratified vengeance, he enjoyed the confusion into which the old knight was thrown.

As to Frideswide, who stood beside the prisoners, she already hated Catherine for her beauty, and, with jealous quickness, watched her every look.

After regarding the old knight steadily for a few moments, Conrad exclaimed, in a voice of bitter mockery—

"You are welcome to Eltham, Sir Lionel! The tables are turned since we last met. Then you were in power; now I am master!"

Sir Lionel made no reply to this speech; and Conrad called for a scourge, which was brought him.

"At length I have an opportunity of requiting thee for the injury thou hast done me!" he said.

And he raised the scourge to strike the

old knight, who regarded him sternly, when Catherine flung herself upon her knees before the vindictive young man, and besought him to spare her father.

"Do not humiliate him thus, I implore you, Conrad!" she exclaimed.

"Why should I forbear to strike him?" cried Conrad, fiercely. "He had no consideration for me!"

"Desist, girl!" exclaimed the old knight, haughtily. "You appeal to one who has no sense of honour. I am unarmed, and a prisoner. The shame will be to himself, should he strike me."

"I was held by thy servants, when struck by thee, or thou hadst not been living now," rejoined Conrad.

"Had I the sword that bold woman bears upon her shoulder, thou wouldst not dare come near me!" cried Sir Lionel. "Nor would I long remain thy prisoner!"

"Give him thy sword," said Conrad to the Amazon.

"Not I, by the Rood!" rejoined Frideswide. "I will sooner put him and his daughter to death!"

And roughly seizing Catherine, who was still on her knees before Conrad, she forced her to rise.

"Help, Conrad!" shrieked Catherine. "Thou wilt not let me be murdered by this terrible woman!"

"Release her!" cried Conrad.

And at the word, Frideswide instantly relinquished her hold of the fair damsel, but looked like a young lioness robbed of her prey.

"Oh! she has hurt me!" exclaimed Catherine, clasping her bruised wrist.

"Thou art fit only for a lady's bower," remarked Frideswide, contemptuously.

"No more of this," said Conrad, authoritatively, to the Amazon.

Then turning to the captive damsel, he added—

"For your sake, Catherine, I am content to spare your father."

There was a slight tenderness in his tone that did not escape Frideswide, and increased her secret anger.

"I knew you would relent, Conrad!" cried Catherine, with a grateful look. "Be wholly generous, and set us free."

"I will ask nothing from him!" said her father, proudly.

"And I will grant nothing more," rejoined Conrad.

"You have granted too much already," muttered Frideswide, who looked sullen and displeased. "Shall I bestow them in a prison chamber?"

"Oh! no—no!" exclaimed Catherine.

Conrad could not resist her imploring look.

"Pledge me your knightly word, Sir Lionel," he said, "that you will not attempt to escape, and neither you nor your daughter shall be placed in confinement."

"What I would not do for myself, I will do for my child," said the old knight.

And he gave the required pledge.

"Conduct them to the State apartments, and let some one attend," said Conrad.

But finding Frideswide unwilling to obey the order, he signed to the captives to follow him, and led them to an adjoining apartment, where he left them, without further speech.

As he came forth, he found Frideswide standing near the door, and bade her, somewhat angrily, begone.

She did not obey; but, looking fixedly at him, said—

"Thou still lov'st this damsel. I am sure of it; and I know what will ensue.

Thou wilt yield to her entreaties, and desert the great cause. Sooner than that shall be," she added, with a look that left no doubt she would execute the threat, "I would kill her with my own hand."

"Thou art mistaken," said Conrad, vainly essaying to pacify her. "The damsel is nothing to me now."

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Frideswide. "Think not to deceive me. I have told thee what I will do. Beware!"

And she marched off, leaving him greatly irritated and perplexed.

"Catherine must not be exposed to the rage of this jealous fury," he thought. "She shall be removed to some strong-room, where she can be carefully guarded. There is a tower in the west angle of the great court, in the lower chamber of which she might be placed. There she would be safe. It shall be so."

Having come to this determination, he gave orders that a repast should be forthwith served to the prisoners, and proceeded to the tower in question.

As will have been surmised, it was the structure beneath which was the entrance to the subterranean passage; but of this circumstance Conrad was ignorant.

On examining the lower chamber of the tower, he thought it well adapted to the purpose required, and gave directions that it should be immediately prepared for Catherine's reception.

X.

HOW CONRAD WAS PREVAILED UPON TO ABANDON THE REBEL CAUSE.

DESIROUS of offering some explanation to the fair damsel before her removal, Conrad next repaired to the apartment in which she and her father were confined.

They had just finished the repast provided for them, and rose from the table as he entered the room, to thank him for the attention shown them.

Evidently Sir Lionel's feelings had undergone a great change. He no longer regarded the young man haughtily, but, advancing towards him, said, in a frank but apologetic tone—

"Conrad Basset, I have wronged you; and I hasten to tell you so. Since I have been brought here, I have seen enough of you to satisfy me that your nature is noble. Pardon me, if you can."

Surprise kept Conrad silent; and he might have doubted that he had heard aright, if Catherine's looks had not shown him that the change in her father's sentiments had not been wrought by her.

"Sir Lionel," he rejoined, "you have effaced the wrong done me. I will think of it no more. Had you said thus much a month ago, I should never have taken up arms against the King."

"Why continue in rebellion against him?" said the old knight. "I owe you a reparation, and will make it. Return to your allegiance, and you shall have my daughter's hand."

"Alas, Sir Lionel," rejoined the young

man, in a troubled tone, the offer comes too late. I have gone too far to retreat."

Catherine caught her father's arm, and whispered in his ear.

"Have no fear," said the old knight, addressing Conrad. "I will procure you a pardon from the King."

"Were I to consent, I should become a double traitor," cried the young man. "Yet if I stay, I feel I shall yield."

"Then you shall not go!" cried Catherine.

"Nay, do not detain me," he exclaimed, unable to tear himself away, and gazing at her passionately.

"Stay! stay! or you will lose me for ever!" she cried, in accents that proved resistless.

"You have conquered, Catherine!" he said. "For your sake I will become faithless and forsworn to my confederates."

"Since you have thus decided, let us fly at once!" she cried.

"Impossible!" he rejoined. "You must leave the palace secretly."

"Secretly! Are you not the commander?"

"You are given in charge to me by Wat Tyler," rejoined Conrad. "I cannot openly disobey his orders. Besides," he added, with a meaning look at Catherine, "you have an enemy who will watch jealously over you, and would assuredly prevent your departure."

"You mean that terrible woman who brought us here, and threatened me?" cried Catherine, trembling. "She frightens me. Do not let her come near me again."

"I will place you where you will be perfectly secure," said Conrad. "I came to tell you so. You must endure a few hours' solitary confinement in a strong-room."

"I will endure anything rather than be

exposed to her malice," cried Catherine. "But will not my father be with me?"

"No, he must remain here," replied Conrad. "He is in no danger. To-night I will liberate you both, and accompany you in your flight. Are you prepared to proceed to the tower at once? I will conduct you thither. No guard will be necessary to your removal."

Catherine expressed her readiness to accompany him.

"Do not fear this separation from your daughter, Sir Lionel," said Conrad. "No harm shall befal her."

"I commit her to your care," replied the old knight, confidently.

Tenderly embracing his daughter, he consigned her to Conrad, by whom she was forthwith conducted to the tower.

As they crossed the court, they observed Frideswide among the spectators, but though

she cast a fierce and vindictive glance at Catherine, she offered no interruption.

"There is that dreadful woman!" exclaimed Catherine, shuddering. "I wish I had not seen her."

Conrad endeavoured to reassure her, and would have thrown back an angry look at Frideswide—but she was already gone.

Somewhat discomposed by this incident, he hurried on to the tower, and having placed the fair captive in the lower chamber, which, as we have stated, had been hastily prepared for her reception, he left her, and stationed a guard at the door, giving strict injunctions that no one should be admitted.

XI.

WHAT BEFEL CATHERINE DE COURCY IN THE PRISON-CHAMBER.

CATHERINE had been for several hours in her prison-chamber, and began to find the long confinement excessively wearisome. However, she consoled herself by the thought that her lover would soon be with her.

Evening had come, and at night he had promised to liberate her and her father, and fly with them from the palace, and she doubted not he would keep his word.

Occupied by such thoughts, she was striving to banish the apprehensions that naturally beset her, when she heard the key

turned in the lock, and started up joyfully, feeling certain it was Conrad.

What was her terror, as the door opened, and Frideswide entered the chamber! She would have shrieked, but fright struck her dumb.

Having closed the door, the dreaded Amazon strode towards her, while the poor girl shrank back as far as possible.

Frideswide's aspect, however, was not so fierce and menacing as it had been. On the contrary, she tried to assume a good-natured look, but the expression was ill-suited to her countenance.

"Be not afraid, fair damsel," she said, in tones as soft as she could employ; "I am come by Conrad's order to take you hence."

"I will not accompany you," rejoined Catherine. "Nor do I believe he has sent you."

"You will change your opinion of me when I show you how easily you can escape," rejoined Frideswide. "I tell you I am sent by Conrad to set you free, and conduct you from the palace."

As she spoke, she stooped down, and opened the large trap-door.

Catherine watched her in astonishment.

"There! Will you believe me now?" said the Amazon, pointing to the steps. "Beneath is a long underground passage, which has an outlet beyond the walls of the palace. I will guide you thither."

"But we have no light," said Catherine, looking down uneasily.

"A light is not needed," rejoined Frideswide. "You will soon be out of the passage, and at liberty."

"I will go with Conrad, but not with you," said Catherine. "Why has he not come himself?"

"Wat Tyler is expected at the palace," rejoined Frideswide. "Conrad has sent me to get you out of the way before his arrival. You need not fear for your father. He can pay a ransom."

These assurances produced a certain impression upon Catherine; but she could not overcome her dread of the Amazon, and again recoiled from her.

Losing all patience, Frideswide seized her, and thrust her down the steps.

The Amazon instantly followed, and shutting the trap-door, stifled the cries of her victim.

An hour later Conrad entered the chamber. He had been alarmed by finding the door unguarded. But the worst apprehensions assailed him when he could nowhere perceive Catherine, but discovered Frideswide in her place.

The Amazon was standing in the centre

of the chamber, with her foot on the trap-door, and looked perfectly calm.

"She thou seekest is not here," she said.

"What hast thou done with her?" demanded Conrad.

"No matter. Thou wilt never behold her again."

"Thou hast robbed me of one I loved better than life, remorseless woman!" cried Conrad, in a voice of anguish.

"The temptress is removed," rejoined Frideswide, sternly. "Thou wilt now continue faithful to the cause."

"Thou art a murderess, and deservest death!" cried Conrad, regarding her with abhorrence.

"I have delivered thee from the sorcery by which thou wert bound," said Frideswide. "By this time Wat Tyler must have returned to the palace. I can justify my-

self before him for what I have done. Come with me!"

And, seizing his hand, she dragged him from the chamber.

XII.

THE INTERVIEW AT ROTHERHITHE.

SUNNY was the day, and bright the river, as the royal barge conveyed the young monarch from the Tower to Rotherhithe, to hold a conference with the rebel leader.

Gorgeous was the burnished vessel; yet those on board it did not seem bound on a voyage of pleasure. The oarsmen were arrayed in the splendid royal liveries, but they were all armed. Archers and men-at-arms took the places of pages and serving men. Gentlemen and esquires were armed. Armed, likewise, were all the members of the Council, except the Archbishop of Canterbury. Richard himself was clad in

chain mail, with a hood and tippet of silk worked with the royal badge and devices, as was his richly embroidered surcoat. The sides of the gilded vessel were hung with shields, each bearing a noble cognisance, and from the stern floated proudly the royal standard.

In the fore part of the barge, surrounded by his attendants, all glittering in polished steel, stood the young King, making a very gallant show.

The Princess of Wales accompanied her son, and had hitherto been seated in the splendid saloon forming the interior of the vessel; but as they were now approaching Rotherhithe, she came forward with Editha, who was her sole attendant.

Ceasing to row, the oarsmen allowed the barge to glide gently down the river towards a point of the low bank on which two horsemen were stationed.

With one of these personages the King and his attendants were well acquainted; but only the Princess and Editha knew the other. However, no one required to be told that this stalwart man-at-arms, mounted on a strong war-horse, with a sword by his side, a dagger at his girdle, and a mace attached to his saddle-bow, was Wat Tyler.

The visor of the rebel leader was raised, so that his broad, masculine countenance could be fully distinguished. Though struck by his powerful frame and determined look, the observers were repelled by the extreme insolence of his demeanour, which was never for an instant abated during the intervew that ensued.

About twenty yards behind the rebel leader, on the grassy bank, were stationed two other persons on horseback, who likewise attracted the attention of the royal

party. These were Conrad Basset and Frideswide. The latter was armed with a two-handed sword, and carried a large triangular shield.

Further off, where the ground began to rise, and was partly covered by timber, a large body of armed insurgents could be descried. This tumultuous host could not be kept in order by its captains; but when the royal barge approached they set up a tremendous shout that startled all who heard it, and made those with the King apprehensive of treachery.

However, the shouting soon ceased, and Richard, who felt no alarm, caused himself to be taken near the shore to converse with the rebel leader.

"Thou art Wat Tyler, I doubt not," he said. "I have come to confer with thee according to my promise. Speak! I am willing to listen to thy petition."

"I have no petition to make," rejoined the rebel leader, haughtily. "I have certain propositions to offer for your Majesty's consideration and acceptance. But our conference must take place in private at Eltham, as I stated by the mouth of my ambassador, Sir John de Newtoun, who is here present."

"And dost thou think his Majesty will trust himself with thee?" demanded Sir Simon Burley.

"Wherefore not?" rejoined Wat Tyler. "I am captain of the vast host quartered at Blackheath, and I promise him my safeguard. If I purposed to ensnare him, I could do so now. Should his Majesty disembark here, I will personally conduct him to Eltham."

"What answer shall I return?" said the King to those near him.

"Reject the offer," rejoined Sir Simon.

"If thou dost mean me well," said Richard to the rebel leader, "why cannot the conference take place here?"

"If it takes place at all, it must be at Eltham, as I have said," replied Wat Tyler, in a decided tone. "And mark me, my liege, if we come not to terms to-day, I will enter London with my whole army to-morrow. I swear it by St. Dunstan!"

"You hear what he says, my lords," observed Richard; "and he can make good his words. He has an army strong enough to enter London. Moreover, as you well know, the citizens are disaffected."

While they were conversing anxiously together Wat Tyler, who had noticed the Princess and Editha among the nobles, again called out—

"My liege, I trust that the Princess, your mother, will assist at the conference,

and I will pray her Grace to bring my daughter with her."

"Will you go with me, madam?" asked Richard.

"Readily," she rejoined. "And I will take Editha with me, as he requests."

"This must not be, my liege," said Sir Eustace de Valletort. "There is some treachery in the villain's proposal. You must not trust yourself with him, nor must the Princess."

"Let me go and speak with him, gracious madam," cried Editha. "Perchance I may produce some effect upon him."

"How say you, Sir Eustace?" said the Princess. "Shall we send her?"

"No, madam," replied the knight. "No one must go ashore." And he added, significantly, "This conference will soon be ended. Be not afraid. Wat Tyler will never enter London."

The words reached Editha's ear, and she trembled exceedingly.

"No faith need be kept with the audacious villain," said the Archbishop of Canterbury. "He hath sworn, if the King shall not accede to his demands, that he will destroy London. 'Tis meet that he be slain."

"Since all the insurgents look to him, the rebellion may be ended by his death," said the Lord Treasurer.

"We should be worse than traitors if we suffered him to escape," said Sir Simon Burley. "Ho, there, archers! make yon rebel your mark!"

And at the order, the archers sprang up and made ready their bows.

All had been over with Wat Tyler at that moment, and perchance the rebellion had been ended at the same time, if Editha had not uttered a slight cry, which she was utterly unable to repress.

This cry did not alarm the rebel leader, or cause him to change his position, but it caught the quick ear of Frideswide, who had listened to all that was said, and narrowly watched the proceedings on board the barge.

She had noticed Sir Simon Burley's gesture, and the slight stir that followed when the archers appeared, and instantly divining their purpose, and dashing forward with lightning swiftness, she came up just in time to spread her broad shield before Wat Tyler, and guard him from the volley of arrows aimed at him.

The rebel chief was unhurt, but a fatal shaft pierced the Amazon's breast, and she would have fallen backwards from her horse, if Conrad, who came up next moment, had not caught her.

Her dying looks were fixed upon him she loved; and, while gasping for breath, she said—

"Catherine still lives! I deceived you—seek her in the subterranean passage 'neath the tower! The key of the iron gates hangs at my girdle. Take it. Forgive me, Conrad—for you I did this wicked act!"

And she expired.

Not without difficulty did Conrad sustain his inanimate burden, till he was relieved from it by a small party of insurgents, sent to him by Wat Tyler.

Maddened with fears for Catherine, he then struck spurs into his steed, and dashed off to Eltham.

Meanwhile, Wat Tyler had galloped off, till he got to a certain distance, when he turned round, and, shaking his hand menacingly, called out, in a stentorian voice—

"Our next meeting—and it will not be long hence—shall take place in the Tower of London!"

Profiting by the means of escape unexpectedly afforded him, Sir John de Newtoun quickly dismounted, and sought refuge in the royal barge.

Seeing that the rebel leader had escaped, Sir Simon Burley ordered the oarsmen to row back to the Tower as swiftly as they could; and the injunction was obeyed.

But all those on board the barge heard the terrific and vengeful yell with which Wat Tyler was greeted when he returned to his followers, and told them of the attack made upon him. They would fain have hurried down to the river, in the hope of wreaking their vengeance on the instigators of the treacherous act, but Wat checked them.

"Doubt not we will have ample vengeance ere long," he said. "The Lord Archbishop and the Lord Treasurer were on board the barge; and if they counselled not

the act, they might have prevented it. We will have both their heads!"

"We will!" roared all the hearers.

"We have nothing further to do here," pursued Wat Tyler. "We must return to Blackheath; and, as soon as the army can be got together, we will march on London."

"To Blackheath!—and then to London!" vociferated the insurgents, brandishing their pikes and gisarmes.

On their arrival at Blackheath they found the whole host in a state of the most furious excitement, a report already having arrived of the treacherous attempt on their leader.

Wat Tyler took advantage of the excitement to get the army together, and this being speedily accomplished, the march commenced.

Before setting out, Wat Tyler sent Hothbrand with a message to his brother chief, who, it will be remembered, was encamped

with the Essex division of the insurgent army on Hampstead Heath, acquainting the Outlaw with his own design, and bidding him make a simultaneous attack on the north side of the city on the following day.

Hothbrand set off on the errand at once, and galloping down to Greenwich, succeeded in procuring a bark to convey him and his steed to the opposite side of the river.

XIII.

HOW CATHERINE WAS FOUND IN THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

SO furiously rode Conrad, that he arrived at Eltham long before the news of Wat Tyler's intended march on London.

Struck by his distracted manner, the guard at the barbacan feared some disaster must have occurred, but did not dare question him.

Riding at once into the great quadrangular court, he flung himself from his panting steed, and hurried to the tower.

Several armed men were standing near the door, and he ordered one of them to bring a lighted torch without delay, and

while the man went on the errand, he entered the chamber in which Catherine had been confined.

Without much difficulty he discovered the trap-door, and had just succeeded in opening it, when the torch was brought him.

Snatching it from the wonder-stricken man, and bidding him remain on guard within the chamber, and suffer none to enter, Conrad plunged down the steps, and gained the vault; but he knew he should not find her there, and went on, his anxiety increasing each moment.

At length he reached the first iron gate, and unlocking it with the key taken from Frideswide, he passed to the second gate, which was quickly thrown open.

Again he hurried on, looking anxiously on either side of the passage; but nothing save bare walls met his view. Fancying, at

length, that he perceived a retreating figure in the distance, he called out.

But the person continued to flee from him. Quickening his pace, he soon became satisfied it was Catherine. Yes! 'twas she! she lived! he was in time to save her!

Bewildered by terror, she ran on, screaming fearfully.

Conrad's agony at this moment cannot be painted. He feared her senses were gone, and she fled so swiftly that he could not overtake her.

At last, when he had almost begun to despair, her strength seemed suddenly to fail her, and she fell to the ground.

In another instant he came up and raised her in his arms. As the dishevelled tresses seemed to blind her, he removed them from her face, but she regarded him with a wild and vacant stare, in which terror predominated.

"Do you not know me, Catherine?" he cried. "'Tis I—'tis Conrad!"

"No; you are not Conrad!" she exclaimed. "You are sent by that cruel woman to kill me. She had no pity in her breast; but if you have any, leave me! Let me die in peace!"

"No; you shall not die, Catherine!" he exclaimed. "I am come to deliver you!"

But the words, though passionately uttered, did not reassure her, and she still shrank from him.

In this dire extremity, Conrad besought St. Catherine, St. Lucy, and all blessed saints to aid the distracted damsel.

The appeal seemed to be answered. From this moment Catherine's senses began to return, and after gazing fixedly at him, she breathed his name.

"Conrad!"

Filled with delight, he strained her to his breast.

"You are just in time, Conrad!" she murmured, faintly. "Had you delayed much longer, you would have found me lifeless!"

Shuddering at the thought, he pressed her still closer to his heart.

"'Tis not an hour since I discovered you were buried here, Catherine," he said, "and I flew to your rescue as fast as my steed would carry me. Had I been too late I would not have survived you. But the good saints who watch over you had pity on us both! Have no more fear! She who sought your destruction is gone, and when dying, repented her cruelty."

"Then I forgive her!" cried Catherine; "and may Heaven forgive her likewise! But let us not stay longer in this dreadful place. Bear me hence, Conrad. I have not power to walk."

Extinguishing the torch, he took her in his arms, and rapidly retraced the course he had pursued.

Passing through the iron gates, which he had left open, he quickly gained the stone steps, and, mounting them, issued forth from the trap-door.

Greatly astonished was the man left on guard when Conrad reappeared with his lovely burden; but he was not allowed to ask any questions, for Catherine had swooned, and Conrad instantly sent him in quest of some of the female servants who had been left in the palace.

By the time the man returned with two of the Princess's handmaidens, Catherine had regained her sensibility, and did not require the restoratives brought by the damsels.

Shortly afterwards she was taken to the Princess's own apartments; and her new

attendants, who seemed greatly interested in her, promised to pay her every attention.

Feeling now quite easy on Catherine's account, Conrad locked the gates in the subterranean passage, and kept the key in his own possession.

Having caused the trap-door to be fastened down, he placed a guard at the door of the chamber, and then went in search of Sir Lionel de Courcy.

During all this time the old knight had not attempted to quit the state apartments, and knew nothing of what had occurred, except that he had been informed that Conrad was gone to Blackheath to attend upon Wat Tyler.

He was, therefore, surprised to see the young man, and still more surprised to hear what had brought him back.

Needless to say that he listened to the recital of his daughter's imprisonment by

Frideswide with the most painful interest; but since Catherine was now free, he could only rejoice, and thank her deliverer. He did so in the warmest terms, and embraced Conrad as a son.

This explanation over, they deliberated long and anxiously as to the best course to be pursued in the present emergency.

Flight would now be easy; and as soon as Catherine had recovered from the shock she had sustained, she could be removed. But where could a place of refuge be found for her? The whole of Kent was in a state of insurrection. No mansion, no castle was secure from the rebels.

To Canterbury it was impossible to return. After much anxious consideration, they resolved to take her to the Dartford Priory. Sir Lionel was acquainted with the Lady Isabel, and felt certain

she would afford her an asylum. Thither, then, he proposed to send his daughter as soon as she could make the journey with safety.

Sir Lionel strongly counselled Conrad not to abandon his post.

"You have now," he said, "the command of a garrison of five hundred men who are likely to continue faithful to you. On no account quit them. Should any reverse happen to Wat Tyler, you can at once declare in favour of the King. By doing so at the right moment, you may materially aid the royal cause. Be guided by me. As soon as I have taken my daughter to the Priory of St. Mary I will return, and remain with you till something is decided. I do not for a moment despair of the royal cause. Though it may be beset by difficulties for a time, its ultimate triumph is certain. Nothing can be more fortunate

than that you are in possession of Eltham. By prudent management you may help to crush the rebellion; and your reward will be proportionate to the service rendered."

"My reward will be sufficient if I obtain your daughter's hand, Sir Lionel," replied Conrad.

END OF BOOK THE THIRD.

BOOK IV.

THE SAVOY.

I.

JACK STRAW'S CASTLE.

LIKE a vulture looking down from a height on a plain covered with herds and flocks, the rapacious Outlaw gazed on London from the summit of Hampstead Hill.

While trying to count the palaces, mansions, halls, monasteries, churches, and hospitals, spread out before him, he thought only of the plunder they would yield.

The fierce Goth at the head of his barbarian host, did not gaze on Rome from the neighbouring hills with greedier eyes than did the insatiate marauder on the great city he had sworn to pillage.

"Its wealthiest merchants shall deliver

up to me all their riches, if they would save their lives. On no other condition will I spare them. This I swear!"

And while pronouncing the vow, he kissed the relic that he constantly wore upon his breast.

At the time when the Essex insurgents were gathered on Hampstead Heath, there was a small tower on the highest point of the hill.

Within this tower, once used as a beacon, the Outlaw had fixed his head-quarters. And though not a vestige of the original structure is left, the site is known, and the much frequented hostel now occupying the spot has acquired the designation of "Jack Straw's Castle."

From the top of the tower floated the banner of St. George, and near it stood the Outlaw.

He had been there nearly three hours,

and during the greater part of the time had been gazing at the doomed city—though he sometimes cast an anxious look in the direction of Blackheath; the position of which was indicated by the hills adjoining that extensive plateau.

At the door of the tower stood the strong black steed, that had borne him safely through so many difficulties and dangers, fully equipped, and with the battle-axe attached to the saddle-bow.

Around the tower, on the brow of the hill, on the gentle slopes, and in the numerous hollows, was gathered the immense host that acknowledged him as leader, and was ready to execute his commands, be they what they might.

The presence of these wild, uncouth men, in their rough garb, and with their strange weapons, was little in harmony with the soft and tranquil character of the place.

Still the scene was very striking, and would have pleased a painter. Many of the insurgents were lying upon the fragrant sod, basking in the sunshine, for the day was hot. Others, seated round the brink of the hollows, watched their comrades, who were leaping, or wrestling, or amusing themselves with other pastimes.

But by far the greater number were standing on the numerous knolls, and looking towards the city, excited by desires of pillage and destruction, akin to those inflaming the breast of their chief.

The Outlaw was still on the top of the tower—still occupied by the same greedy thoughts—when his attention was caught by a horseman riding quickly up the south side of the hill.

At once he recognised Hothbrand.

Evidently he was the bearer of a message from Wat Tyler, and the Outlaw awaited

his arrival with impatience, but did not quit his own position.

Several inquisitive insurgents crowded round Hothbrand, as he galloped on, but he refused to satisfy their curiosity, and halted not till he reached the foot of the tower.

Saluting the chief, he then proceeded to deliver his message.

"Wat Tyler greets thee well!" he said. "He is marching on London, and desires thee likewise to advance."

"Thou bringst me good news, Hothbrand, and I thank thee for it!" replied the Outlaw, joyfully. "Yet doth it surprise me, for I heard my brother was about to meet the King at Rotherhithe. The conference, I conclude, has come to nought?"

"To worse than nought," replied Hothbrand. "It had well nigh resulted in the death of the brother chief. A snare was laid

for him by the Council, and he narrowly escaped from it with life."

"Now, by St. Nicholas, their treachery shall be speedily punished!" roared the Outlaw. "Comrades, ye hear what our valiant lieutenant, Hothbrand, saith!" he cried, in a voice of thunder, to the throng gathering thickly around. "The Council have dealt treacherously with my brother, Wat Tyler, and have sought to slay him. Shall we not slay them?"

"Ay, marry!" responded the insurgents, brandishing their pikes and bills.

"Hark ye, comrades!" cried Hothbrand, anxious to inflame them still further. "Wat Tyler believes the instigators of the perfidious design were the Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Robert Hales, the Lord High Treasurer. Both were in the barge with the King."

"Both shall be put to death!" shouted *the infuriated* peasants.

"You will not have your wish just yet, for they are safe within the Tower," said Hothbrand.

Cries of angry disappointment arose from the throng.

"Wherever they may be, they shall not escape us!" said the Outlaw. "As to the Lord High Treasurer, we can take ample vengeance on him. We will burn the Temple, which he governs, and destroy all the Chancery records. Moreover, we will burn the rich Priory of St. John of Jerusalem, near Clerkenwell, of which he is Grand Master; but we will first strip it of all its treasures. The revenues of that hospital are immense. Would we could collect them all; but we will get what we can."

This proposition, being in exact accordance with the wishes of the peasants, was received by them with acclamations.

"Forget not that Sir Robert Hales hath

a manor at Highbury," said Hothbrand. "You can discern the mansion from this spot. Yonder it stands amid the trees, about half a mile from Clerkenwell."

"I see it plainly enough!" rejoined the Outlaw. "By my troth! it is a stately mansion; but it shall soon be levelled with the ground! We will sack and burn it as we march to Clerkenwell."

Placing his bugle to his lips he then sounded a loud and prolonged blast that echoed far and wide, and roused the entire host.

As soon as he perceived that the men were in motion, he took down the banner, and, waving it aloft, pointed with his sword towards the city, shouting, "To London!"

"To London!" repeated a thousand eager voices.

Descending from the tower, he gave the banner to the man accustomed to bear it,

and mounting his steed, put himself at the head of the host, calling out, "St. George for Merry England!"

This evoked fresh cries.

He then rode down the hill, attended by Hothbrand, and followed by the whole body of the insurgents.

At that time the country between Hampstead and London was, for the most part, open, and the rebels marched on with very little interruption to the large park surrounding Sir Robert Hales's noble mansion at Highbury.

Made aware of their approach by the hideous tintamar, the inmates of the mansion fled, and hurried off to St. John's Priory, carrying the news with them.

After being ransacked, the magnificent mansion was set on fire.

II.

HOW THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM WAS PILLAGED AND BURNT.

ONE of the richest and most beautiful religious houses then existing near London was the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, at Clerkenwell.

The Priory was founded about two centuries previously by Jourdain de Brisset, a wealthy Norman baron, and the Lady Muriel, his wife, and belonged to the Knights Hospitallers.

Not far from the Priory stood a large Benedictine Nunnery, likewise founded by the before-mentioned pious and charitable personages.

With the Nunnery the Outlaw determined

not to meddle, and he gave strict orders to his followers that the holy sisterhood should in no way be molested, or their habitation injured.

No murmurs were raised at the injunction, for the insurgents were quite content that the Priory of St. John's should be given up to them. Permission to pillage and destroy this vast and magnificent edifice was sufficient to satisfy their rapacity, as well as their desire for vengeance.

How tranquil looked the grey and reverend pile as the marauding host approached it on that lovely summer e'en, bent on its plunder and destruction.

Not far from it stood the Nunnery, looking equally calm and beautiful.

Both were large and picturesque structures, and both charmingly situated near a wide green, that took its name from

a well of marvellous virtue arising within it.

Yet those inside the Priory were far from tranquil. They knew that the Grand Master's mansion at Highbury was burnt, and felt sure from the threats uttered by the rebels that their own turn would come next.

Preparations for defence were hastily made, but it was clear that the place could not hold out long.

Geoffrey de Burgh, Prior of St. John's, had been a valiant warrior in his time, and all the brotherhood were Knights Templars; but they had long ceased to bear arms, and devoted themselves solely to religious exercises. All, however, were ready to take up the sword again, and die in defence of the Hospital.

But the Prior hoped it would not come to such a pass, and persuaded himself he

might be able to prevail on the leader of these lawless men to retire. Alas! he knew not with whom he had to deal.

When the Outlaw and Hothbrand, followed by a large band of insurgents, rode up to the magnificent gateway, they found it shut, and were about to break down the gate, when a noise was heard above, and the Prior and the holy brotherhood appeared on the battlements.

Geoffrey de Burgh was well stricken in years, but he bore himself proudly, and had a bold and lofty look, and even though arrayed in his full ecclesiastical habits, he looked more like a warrior than a monk. His hood was thrown back so as fully to display his striking countenance.

It may be proper to mention that the Prior was secretly armed, and that the whole of the knightly brotherhood wore armour under their gowns, and had swords

by their sides. To all appearance, however, they were in religious attire.

"What would ye?" demanded the Prior. "'Tis almost needless to inquire your purpose; yet I would learn it from your own lips."

"Our purpose, most holy father," rejoined the Outlaw, in a jeering tone, "is to take possession of this Hospital, to drive you and your brethren from it, to seize upon all your plate, jewels, and treasures, and then to burn down the edifice."

"Your wickedness and audacity exceed all belief," exclaimed the Prior.

"To this act of retributive justice," pursued the Outlaw, "we are moved by the treasonable attempt just made by your Grand Master upon the life of our leader. We will have vengeance."

"Have ye no dread of the Church's most terrible anathemas?" demanded the

Prior. "Withdraw at once, ye sacrilegious wretches, or I will launch them upon you!"

"Pour out the whole vials of your wrath upon our head, an it please you, most holy father!" rejoined the Outlaw, in a tone of contemptuous indifference. "We are not likely to be turned from our purpose by denunciations! But we have talked long enough. Cause the gates, I pray you, to be forthwith unfastened, or we will burst them open and enter!"

"Thou wilt never enter, sacrilegious villain!" cried one of the brethren, stepping forward with an arbalest, which he had held concealed behind him.

And he launched a bolt, but though it struck the Outlaw on the breast, it did him no injury.

"Well shot!" he cried. "But thou didst not know that I wear a sacred relic on my

breast—to say nothing of my jerkin of cuirbouilly!"

He then added, quickly, to those behind him, "Shoot, archers!—shoot!"

In immediate answer to the injunction, a volley of arrows winged their flight to the battlements; but none were hit, the Prior and the brethren having sought shelter.

The Outlaw then ordered his men to burst open the gates, and the direction was speedily carried out.

No sooner was the entrance free than the most eager among the rebels rushed tumultuously in, without waiting for their leaders; but they were astounded to find a small party of knights drawn up in the centre of the courtyard, sword in hand, and fully prepared to receive them.

The Prior and the holy brotherhood had resumed their former accoutrements.

Had the old warriors been provided with

steeds they could easily have ridden down their assailants, and cut their way through the host outside. But flight being impossible, they resolved to sell their lives dearly.

Shouting his battle-cry as of old, Sir Geoffrey de Burgh, by the sweep of his sword, soon cleared the crowd near him, and performed prodigies of valour, lopping off heads, feet, arms, and legs as he went on.

The knights who followed supported him with such energy that they forced the rebels to retire, and would probably have driven them out altogether had it not been for the Outlaw, who, seeing how matters stood, dashed forward on his charger, and smote the old knight with his battle-axe.

Close followed by Hothbrand, he struck down three or four other knights; and the rebels, animated by the example of their leader, and reinforced, turned, and after a

short but terrific conflict, the whole of the Knight Hospitallers were slain.

As the Outlaw, who was entirely uninjured in the deadly strife, gazed around the court of the once peaceful Priory, now deluged with gore, and strewn with the bodies of peasants and noble knights mingled together, he exclaimed, in exultation, "Amply is my brother avenged!"

Through this scene of slaughter the insurgents, who were thronging through the gateway as if for a *fête*, had to pass, but they heeded not the frightful spectacle.

Receiving permission from their leaders to plunder the hospital, they spread themselves in all directions; rushing into the great hall, into the church, the chapel, the Prior's apartments, the refectories, the dormitories, everywhere; seizing everything they could lay hands upon with an assiduity perfectly surprising.

They seized all the plate, jewels, and ornaments that they could find in the church and the chapel; the great gilt candlesticks, the gilt crosses, the gilt pix, the chalices, censers, cruets, and crysmatories.

Entering the vestry, they purloined all the vestments they could discover in the ambreys and chests; copes of red silk, full of imagery; suits of white damask and baudkin; copes with birds of gold; copes with gold lions and silver unicorns; chasubles of blue; red palls for sepulture; albs with apparel; vestments of white damask with crosses; altar fronts of blue velvet, embroidered with archangels; great silver candlesticks, and silver lamps.

Such was some of the treasure appropriated by the rebels.

How much else the sacrilegious villains carried off before the magnificent pile was set on fire cannot be stated. It is sad to

reflect upon the destruction they accomplished.

While this work of plunder was going on, such of the household as were able to escape took refuge in the Nunnery, where shelter was given them by the abbess.

When every article of value had been carried off, the Hospital was fired in several places; but at first the flames made slow progress, as if unwilling to destroy so fair an edifice.

At night, the burning pile formed a grand and mournful spectacle.

The lurid light of the conflagration fell upon thousands of wild figures gathered upon the green, and gave them a weird and fantastic appearance.

The Outlaw and Hothbrand were stationed on horseback before the entrance of the Convent, so as to prevent any harm from being done to that building.

Distracted with terror, with the red light reflected upon the walls, and gleaming through the windows of the Convent, with the hideous and appalling outcries of the miscreants ringing in their ears, the poor sisters passed a dreadful night.

The burning Hospital formed a conspicuous object from the walls on the north side of the city, and struck terror into all beholders, most of whom believed that the Nunnery was likewise on fire.

For seven days the fire continued, and even then the vast building was not entirely consumed. The great gateway was uninjured, and still exists.

After watching by the conflagration during the greater part of the night, the Outlaw snatched a few hours' repose on the green, after which he set off with his followers to meet his brother chief at London Bridge.

III.

HOW LAMBETH PALACE WAS BURNT.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the terrible events previously narrated, Wat Tyler's host had marched on to Southwark, causing havoc and desolation on the way thither.

The suburbs on the Surrey side of the river, even then very extensive and containing very large mansions, palaces, and monasteries, beside other buildings, lay entirely at the mercy of the marauders, and very few of the noble edifices were spared.

Winchester House, the palace of the Bishop of Rochester, the houses of the Abbots of Hyde, St. Augustine and Battle,

and the residence of the Prior of Lewes, were plundered, and partly destroyed.

All the prisons were broken open—the Marshalsea, the habitation of the Master of the Marshalsea, the King's Bench, the Clink, and the Compter; and the prisoners being let loose, gave their best aid to their deliverers in the work of destruction.

Their ranks being thus reinforced by the worst malefactors, the rebels committed even greater outrages than before.

On hearing of Wat Tyler's approach, the Lord Mayor caused the gates of London Bridge to be closed, and strongly guarded; and being thus prevented from crossing the river, the insurgents contented themselves with doing all the mischief they could in Southwark.

Their chief object being to pillage the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, they marched thither, and on the way destroyed

all the small habitations on the Bankside, the occupants—most of whom were Flemings—being obnoxious to them.

Originally built in 1188, by Archbishop Baldwin, the palace at Lambeth was repaired and greatly enlarged in 1250, about thirty years before the date of our story, by Archbishop Boniface, who rebuilt the whole of the north side, added the grand apartments, the library, the cloisters, the guard-chamber, and the tower, subsequently known as the Lollards' Tower.

During its occupation by Simon de Sudbury, the palace was kept up with great splendour.

An ineffectual attempt was made by the guard to defend the palace, but they were quickly overpowered and slain, and the rebels bursting into the archiepiscopal apartments and the chapel, quickly stripped them, tearing the arras from the walls and the curtains from *the windows*, and pulling down the throne.

All the time they were thus employed, they gave utterance to terrible denunciations against the Archbishop. Having completed their work of plunder, they set fire to the palace, and raised a most terrific shout when the flames began to rise.

So loud was the shout, that it was heard at the Tower by the Archbishop himself, and caused his heart to sink within him. He knew it announced the slaughter of his faithful servants, and the spoliation and destruction of his house.

The calamity was hard to bear, but he bowed his head in resignation, murmuring only the words, "*Fiat Voluntas Tua.*"

Not only were the ears of the good Archbishop pierced by that terrific shout, but his eyes were blasted by the sight of the flames arising from his palace.

Having mounted to the summit of the White Tower with the King, and the rest of

the Council, to watch the proceedings of the rebels, he had tracked their desolating course along the Bankside, until they reached Lambeth; where, after he had been kept in a terrible state of suspense for awhile, his worst fears were realized.

All forbore to address him, feeling they could offer no consolation.

The Archbishop was still stunned by this heavy blow, when word was brought the Lord High Treasurer, who was standing near him, that his mansion at Highbury was burnt, the Hospital of St. John's plundered and in flames, and the Prior and all the holy brotherhood slain.

Woful tidings these for the Grand Master. But he did not submit patiently to the decrees of Heaven, like the Archbishop.

Stamping his foot with rage, and uttering a dire malediction against the rebels, he vowed revenge.

The King and the Council gazed anxiously at each other, with looks that seemed to ask, "What further ill-tidings are in store? and what will the morrow bring forth?"

As yet London Bridge was secure.

But how long could it be maintained against the tremendous host which they beheld swarming upon the banks of the river, from the Church of St. Mary Overy to Lambeth?

The City was likewise safe. No gate had yet been forced.

But who could answer that every entrance would not be thrown open on the morrow by the disaffected burgesses? Never before was London in such a strait! Never before were King, nobles, and knights in such fearful jeopardy!

As to the nobles, it seemed probable they would soon be exterminated by the commonalty they had so long and so grievously oppressed.

In that event, the King would be left alone; if, indeed, the rebels meant to spare *him.*

A strange picture was presented to those who gazed from the summit of the White Tower, on that beautiful summer evening. Fire and sword had done their dreadful work on the banks of the Thames, and the smooth surface of the river was dyed with a ruddier glow than that of the setting sun.

London Bridge, with its tall houses, towers, and gates, occupied, by armed men, stood out like a huge black mass against the rosy western sky.

But the flames of Lambeth Palace, and of the still burning habitations on the Bank-side, were reflected on the massive tower and lofty spire of St. Paul's, on Westminster Hall and Abbey, and on the Savoy, the magnificent palace of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

The embattled front of the last-named edifice, with its turrets and magnificent bay-windows looking upon the river, was so brightly lighted up that it seemed on fire, as if anticipating its approaching doom.

In the north, the sky was reddened with the reflection of the burning Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem.

The contemplation of this striking picture, fraught, as it was, with beauty and terror, depressed the young King so much, that, afraid of betraying weakness, he hastily descended from the summit of the donjon; and, without waiting for the Council, proceeded to his mother's apartments in the Palace.

IV.

EDITHA'S MISSION TO WAT TYLER.

THE Princess was conversing anxiously with Chaucer, who, it may be remembered, was a prisoner at the Tower at the time, when the King abruptly entered.

Rushing towards her with a distracted look, and regardless of those present, he exclaimed, "All is lost!"

"What mean you, my son?" she cried, starting up.

"Know you not that Wat Tyler is at the gates?" he rejoined. "To-morrow he will enter London as a conqueror, and snatch the crown from my brow!"

"Heaven forbid!" she ejaculated. "Much

may be lost, but your crown, I trust, is safe."

"You would not think so, madam," he cried, "if you had beheld the sight I have just witnessed—a countless host of rebels gathered on the banks of the Thames. Wat Tyler's name resounded on all sides. He is omnipotent. Advance he will; I have not the power to drive him back!"

Then, becoming aware of Chaucer's presence, he added, quickly, "You have great influence with this powerful rebel, good Master Chaucer. Exert it now, and make me for ever beholden to you."

"Alas! my gracious liege, you mistake," rejoined the poet. "I have no influence with him; but there is one person here present to whom he cannot refuse to listen—his daughter."

Thus alluded to, Editha came forward, and, addressing the King, said—

"If your Majesty only expresses the wish, I will go to him at once."

"The damsel cannot go alone, my liege," said Chaucer. "I am ready to attend her on the mission, which, perilous as it seems, may, perchance, prove successful."

"I pray you let me go, sire," said Editha. "Something tells me I shall prevail with him."

"Be it as you will," replied Richard. "Should any harm come to you, I shall never forgive myself!"

Then, taking her aside, he said, in a low, significant tone—

"If you see Wat Tyler, tell him there is nothing I will not grant."

She made no reply, but looked at him fixedly.

After a moment's pause Richard went on—

"Were he to ask me to make you my queen, I would assent."

A flush came over her fair face; but it instantly fled, and she replied, in a low, firm tone—

"No, my liege, I will not delude him!"

Ere Richard could make any rejoinder, she turned to the Princess, and said—

"Have I your Highness's permission to set out on this errand?"

"I am loth to give it," replied the Princess. "Yet I cannot refuse. Promise to return to me, if you can."

"Your Grace need not doubt me," she rejoined, earnestly. "No time should be lost. Are you ready to set forth, good Master Chaucer?"

"On the instant," he replied.

"I trust to see you back at the Tower," said Richard. "But understand, you are no longer a prisoner!"

While Editha withdrew to make some slight change in her attire, and put on a

hood, Richard sent for the Lieutenant, and bade him instantly prepare a boat to convey Chaucer and a companion across the river, on a secret mission.

Without asking questions, the Lieutenant proceeded to execute the command.

Five minutes afterwards the gate beneath St. Thomas's Tower was thrown open, and a boat propelled by four vigorous oarsmen, and containing two persons, shot with lightning swiftness across the river.

As it was now almost dark, the boat was not perceived, and Chaucer and Editha were safely landed at the wharf in front of St. Olave's Church, about a bow-shot below London Bridge.

Their task accomplished, the oarsmen speeded back again.

In another instant a dozen rebels, armed with pikes, rushed up to those who had just

stepped ashore, and bade them give an account of themselves.

"Who and what are you? and whence came you?" cried several threatening voices.

"We are friends, and come from the Tower," replied Chaucer.

"Friends! and from the Tower! That may scarce be," cried the foremost of the party.

"'Tis true, nevertheless," rejoined Chaucer. "Take us to your leader."

"Not till we have further questioned you," cried the man.

But Editha, who had recognised his voice, removed her hood, and said—

"Do you not know me, good Master Liripipe?"

"By St. Bridget! it is Wat Tyler's daughter, Editha!" cried the person addressed.

"Art certain?" observed Josbert Grouthead, who was near him.

"As certain as I am that this is Master Geoffrey Chaucer," replied Liripipe.

"Nay; an it be so, we must take them forthwith to Wat Tyler," cried another.

"I pray you do, good Master Curthose. You will be thanked for your pains," said Editha.

"She knows me!" exclaimed Curthose. "It must be Editha. We will conduct the damsel to her father at once. He will be right glad to see her."

"Where is your leader?" inquired Chaucer.

"His head-quarters are at the 'Tabard,' in the High Street, close at hand," replied Curthose, whose manner was now completely changed. "Doubtless he is there now, since he hath only just returned from Lambeth."

"Then pray conduct us to him without

delay, for our business is most important," said the poet.

Placing them in their midst, in order to protect them from the tumultuous crowd, the party proceeded towards the High Street. As they came forth from the back of St. Olave's Church, they cast a glance towards London Bridge, the gates of which were covered with archers and cross-bowmen. High Street was full of armed rebels, and it was with difficulty they could force their way along the crowded thoroughfare. Without the escort they could never have got on. Many sights attracted attention; but they were chiefly struck by the ruins of the two great prisons — the Marshalsea and the King's Bench.

At length, after frequent stoppages, the party reached the "Tabard."

The large courtyard of the hostel was full of armed men, carousing, and making a great

clamour; but it appeared that Wat Tyler was in the principal guest-chamber with John Ball, discussing his plans over a flask of wine.

On seeing Editha and Chaucer, who were brought in by Liripipe and the others, Wat Tyler started to his feet, but, instead of welcoming the young damsel with the affection of a father, he uttered an angry exclamation that seemed to bode ill for the success of her mission.

Scarcely deigning to notice Chaucer, he snatched up a light, and ordered Editha to follow him into an inner room.

Closing the door, he demanded, in a stern tone, why she had left the Tower.

"You have interfered with my plans by coming hither!" he said.

"I am sent by the King," she rejoined.

"Seeks he to make peace with me?" he demanded.

"He does," she replied. "Will aught induce you to spare London, and retire?"

"No!" he replied. "Were the Council to sue to me in a body, I would not retire. I am master now! London is at my feet! I shall spare none of its nobles and rich men. But I shall not harm the King. I have other designs in regard to him. Thou shalt share his throne!"

"And can you seriously indulge such a thought?" she said.

"Seriously—ay! Wherefore not? He will be glad to espouse thee to save his crown."

"But you do not deem it necessary to ask whether I will consent to such a scheme."

"Tut! Thou art not likely to object!"

"You judge me by yourself, but you are mistaken! I am not a fitting consort for the King!"

"Fitting or not, he shall wed thee!"

"Dismiss these thoughts from your mind, I implore you," she said. "I am not to be dazzled by the splendour of the offer made me, and reject it!"

"Reject it! ha! Do I hear aright!" cried Wat Tyler, astounded. "You will wed whom I please!"

"I have already expressed my fixed determination, and shall abide by it," she rejoined, calmly but firmly.

"Time will show," said Wat. "You must return at once to the Tower!"

"Will you not listen to what I have to say?" she cried.

"To what end?" he rejoined, sternly. "I will grant nothing! Say to the King that he may expect me, ere long, at the Tower. And I will then propose my terms to him!"

She made another effort to move him, but he continued inflexible, and took her back

to the large room, where he had left Chaucer and the others.

All looked surprised, but the rebel leader's aspect was so stern that none dared to question him. Not even John Ball made a remark.

"Take back this damsel to St. Olave's Wharf," he said to the men; "and find a boat to convey her to the Tower."

"That will be difficult, if not impossible," said Liripipe.

"No—a boat will be sent for her," said Wat.

"I will go with her," cried Chaucer.

"You can accompany her to the wharf," rejoined Wat Tyler; "but you must return to me. You cannot re-enter the Tower."

Deeming it useless to remonstrate, Chaucer did not make the attempt.

Nothing more was said. The party went back as they came.

Wat Tyler was right. No sooner did Editha appear on the wharf, than the boat that had brought her over shot swiftly across the river, and took her back to St. Thomas's Tower.

Chaucer did not embark, and returned, in a very melancholy frame of 'mind, to the "Tabard."

V.

THE MEETING OF THE REBEL LEADERS AT LONDON BRIDGE.

EVER since the outbreak of the insurrection the weather had been uniformly fine; and a morn more beauteous was never beheld than that which heralded the following day.

Bright sunshine lighted up the quaint habitations, monasteries, convents, churches, and hospitals of old London. Bright sunshine lighted up the old walls and gates of the City, thronged with armed men. It lighted up the battlements and gates of the Tower, likewise thronged with archers and cross-bowmen; St. Paul's, with its tower and spire; and, above, the ancient Abbey.

On the opposite side of the river, all was ruin and desolation. Monasteries, mansions, prisons, churches, burnt or demolished; Lambeth Palace still smoking.

The whole of Southwark was filled with an armed host; and such was the terror of the inhabitants, that they were compelled to join the rebels.

But we must now see what had taken place on the other side of London.

At daybreak the Outlaw, flushed with success, appeared with his host before Bishopsgate, and sent Hothbrand forward to sound a trumpet and demand admittance.

This was refused by the guard, and bolts and arrows were discharged at the rebels.

Thereupon the Outlaw commanded an immediate attack, but while this was going on, a party of disaffected citizens came up, and forcing away the guard, threw open the

gate, and the insurgents marched into the City.

The men were disposed to indulge in triumph, but their leader ordered them to march on quickly to London Bridge, in order to effect a junction with Wat Tyler; and they proceeded thither accordingly, without meeting with any opposition.

Already the north gates of the bridge were thrown open, and the insurgents were welcomed enthusiastically by a large party of citizens favourable to the cause.

On they marched through the narrow street formed by the tall habitations lining either side of the bridge, brandishing their weapons, and making a most terrific din.

The gates on the Surrey side of the bridge had been thrown open, and here, in the open space, at the end of the High Street, a meeting took place between the rebel leaders.

Wat Tyler, attended by John Ball, con-

gratulated the Outlaw on his success, and thanked him heartily for what he had done; but his haughty manner did not altogether please his brother chief.

Leaving the men to keep possession of the bridge, the three leaders proceeded to the "Tabard," where they breakfasted.

As soon as their hasty meal was concluded, Wat Tyler said to his brother chiefs, "Before we attack the Tower, we will prove to all that we belong not to John of Gaunt by burning down his Palace of the Savoy. How say you, brothers?"

"I approve the step," replied the monk. "It will convince the people that we mean not to be governed by the King's uncles."

"Ay, marry will it!" said the Outlaw. "What a plunder we shall have," he added, with a ferocious laugh. "'Tis said the Duke's palace contains more plate and treasure than any other mansion in England."

"The palace must not be plundered," observed Wat Tyler, sternly and authoritatively.

"Not plundered!" exclaimed the Outlaw, in astonishment.

"A proclamation shall be made that no man, on penalty of death, shall presume to convert to his own use anything within the Savoy Palace. All plate, vessels of gold and silver, and all costly ornaments, of which there are plenty, shall be broken in pieces."

"This will cause great dissatisfaction among the men," observed the Outlaw.

"It will prove to the citizens that we desire not private gain, but right and justice," said John Ball. "We are not robbers, but liberators."

"The proclamation, I repeat, will give rise to much murmuring," said the Outlaw. "I like it not."

"I have a task will suit thee well," ob-

served Wat Tyler to the Outlaw. "While I am engaged in the destruction of the Savoy, thou shalt demolish Newgate, and liberate the prisoners."

"I should prefer the former task," grumbled the Outlaw. "But no matter."

"Thou shalt go with me, good Master Chaucer," observed Wat Tyler to the poet, who was present at the discussion, "and see justice done upon the Duke."

"If I thought my voice would be listened to, I would implore you not to destroy the noble Palace of the Savoy," said the poet.

"Thy supplications are vain," rejoined Wat Tyler, sternly. "The Duke of Lancaster is a traitor to the people. We will punish him."

"Once again I say to you, the people have no better friend than John of Gaunt," cried Chaucer.

"Go to!" said Wat Tyler. "I have heard enough in his praise. We will now set out. Five thousand men will suffice to accomplish the demolition of the Savoy. The rest shall remain to pull down Newgate, and keep the King and the Council safely cooped up in the Tower."

"Be it so," replied the Outlaw. "When I have done with Newgate, I will look after the Lombard Street merchants. I have an account to settle with Messrs. Benedetto."

"Do what you will," replied Wat Tyler. "But meddle not with the Tower till I return from the Savoy."

They then went forth, and mounted their horses, which were kept ready for them in the courtyard of the "Tabard."

They next proceeded along the High Street towards London Bridge—word being given to the enormous host that they were about to enter the City. Chaucer was pro-

vided with a horse, and rode beside Hothbrand.

For nearly two hours a dense mass was constantly pouring over London Bridge.

On the entrance of the rebel army into the City—partly from good-will, partly from fear—the citizens gave them an enthusiastic welcome, and opened their houses and cellars to them.

In a word, they hailed them as deliverers—whether sincerely or not may be questioned.

The three leaders proceeded together along Cornhill and Cheapside, to Newgate, where the Outlaw and Hothbrand, with a vast number of rebels, stopped to demolish the gate and prison; while Wat Tyler and John Ball descended Ludgate Hill with five thousand men, and marched along Fleet Street to the Strand.

VI.

HOW WAT TYLER SAT IN JOHN OF GAUNT'S CHAIR.

PRESENTLY they came in sight of the Savoy, the magnificent mansion belonging to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, "to the which," saith old Holinshed, "in beauty and stateliness of building, with all manner of princely furniture, there was not any other in the realm comparable."

Viewed either from the Strand or from the river, the ducal Palace of the Savoy presented a magnificent appearance, and its internal arrangements corresponded with its splendid exterior.

Built about the year 1245—nearly a cen-

tury and a half before the date of our story, by Peter, Earl of Savoy and Richmond—the noble palace in question was transferred to the friars of Mountjoy, from whom it was purchased by Eleanor, Queen of Henry III., for her son Henry, Duke of Lancaster. By him it was greatly enlarged and beautified at an enormous expense. The palace was assigned as a residence to King John of France, while that unfortunate monarch was a captive in England, in 1357, and again six years later. It subsequently came into the possession of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by whom it was still further enlarged and greatly embellished.

Such was this splendid palace when the rebels approached, bent on its utter demolition. Not only was it magnificent, but full of rich furniture, arras, pictures, plate, jewels, and wine. In a word, it was the residence of the proudest and most powerful

peer in England, who claimed, in right of his wife, daughter of Don Pedro, to be King of Castile.

The Duke of Lancaster had a princely establishment, more numerous, more splendid than that of the King. He had a high chamberlain, a vice-chamberlain, gentlemen ushers, gentlemen waiters, lords, knights, and esquires, gentlemen cupbearers, carvers, sewers, fifty yeomen ushers, grooms of the chamber, pages, doctors, a chaplain, an almoner, minstrels, yeomen porters, tall yeomen for the house, a steward, and a treasurer, making in all some three or four hundred persons.

Such was the terror inspired by the rebels, that when the officers of this splendid establishment heard that Wat Tyler had crossed London Bridge and was marching through the City, with the declared intention of demolishing the palace, they abandoned all

thought of defending it, and fled in a body, leaving only half a dozen persons behind. These were the steward, the comptroller, and four tall and stout yeomen. Of necessity, they could offer no real resistance; but they closed the great outer gates, and made fast all the doors.

On arriving at the palace with his men, Wat Tyler gazed at it with admiration, and was so impressed by its grandeur that for a moment he thought he should like to keep it for himself. But he gave up the notion almost as soon as formed, and caused his proclamation to be read that no one, on pain of death, should secrete or carry off any part of the plate or ornaments.

"Doubt not," he cried, in a loud voice, "that the penalty will be inflicted!"

As the rebels had heard of the flight of the household, they burst open the gates

and doors very deliberately, and then rushed into the palace.

Their entrance, however, was opposed by the steward and those with him; but only for a moment. These brave and faithful individuals were instantly despatched.

Among the first to enter the palace was Wat Tyler, as he desired to behold it in all its splendour before it became a wreck.

But while he looked at the great oak staircase, with its sculptures and armorial bearings, its beauties were hidden by a crowd of savage-looking peasants mounting to the grand gallery above, which they speedily filled, tearing down the tapestry and destroying all the pictures and ornaments.

Scarcely had he entered the great banqueting-hall and noted its magnificent furniture, than it was invaded by another party, who were about to commence the work of de-

struction; but Wat Tyler authoritatively commanded them to desist, and taking his seat in John of Gaunt's chair, and placing John Ball on his left, and Chaucer, whom he had compelled to follow him, on a seat below, ordered that all the valuables should be collected and placed on the table before him, that he might see them destroyed.

This was done with the utmost expedition. All the chests and cupboards were emptied, and the great table, at which the Duke's retainers were wont to dine, was almost entirely covered with immense vessels of gold and silver, such as were displayed on solemn occasions, most of them beautifully graven, great silver bowls, flagons, goblets, and wine-pots of quaint device.

To these were added all the ornaments that could be collected, chains, girdles, brooches, buckles, ornamented with diamonds and other precious stones, embroidered

mantles and apparel, and garments of gold and silver, making a most magnificent display.

Chaucer groaned internally as he beheld this mighty heap of treasure and rich apparel, so soon to be sacrificed.

Wat Tyler then ordered a repast to be served, of which he and John Ball partook. The rebel leaders invited Chaucer to sit down with them, but though the poet complied, he ate nothing.

Taking a large goblet from the heap, Wat caused it to be filled with choice Gascoigne wine from the Duke's cellars, and after he had drunk a deep draught, he threw the cup down on the floor, and crushed it with his foot.

Perceiving that the men standing around were gazing at the glittering pile before them with greedy eyes, and fearing they might be tempted to disobey his orders, Wat caused

hammers to be brought, wherewith all the gold and silver plate and vessels were beaten out of shape and broken in pieces.

The ornaments were next destroyed, the jewels and other precious stones being ground down in mortars, and the dust scattered about; while the embroidered apparel and garments of cloth of gold and silver were hacked to pieces.

Wat Tyler went forth upon the terrace to see the fragments of the gold and silver vessels cast into the Thames, taking Chaucer with him.

When the last basket had been emptied into the river, he remarked, with a stern smile, to the poet—

"Tell the Duke what thou hast seen, and he will understand how I would have served him had he been here! Thou art now free, and mayest depart, unless thou dost prefer to stay, and see the palace burnt down!"

"I have seen too much already!" replied Chaucer, sorrowfully. "I will take a farewell look at the edifice I have so much loved, and then depart."

After gazing for a moment at the splendid pile, which now seemed more beautiful than ever, he went his way.

As soon as he was free from the rebels, the poet made haste to quit London, and returned not till these terrible times were past.

"Now set fire to the palace!" cried Wat, "and let the work be done effectually!"

While the order was eagerly obeyed, and fire applied to the combustibles already heaped in different parts of the building, Wat Tyler quitted the river terrace.

As he strode through the palace, and once more noted its grandeur, he may perchance have felt some compunction. But it swayed him not.

Having seen the combustibles lighted, he went forth and stationed himself in the front court to watch the conflagration.

The fire burnt with extraordinary rapidity, and flames soon broke out from some of the great bay-windows.

Orders had been given that every one should come forth; but they were very slowly obeyed, and a trumpet was now sounded to recall them. Presently half a dozen men rushed out, having a prisoner with them. They brought him before their leader, who saw at once that it was Liripipe.

"What hath he done?" demanded Wat.

"He hath disobeyed thine order, and concealed a large piece of gold plate beneath his jerkin!" replied one of the captors. "Behold it!"

"He must die!" replied Wat, sternly.

"Spare me!" cried the wretch. "Thou

hast known me many years in Dartford! I have restored the plate!"

"Thou hadst hidden it!" cried the man who had accused him. "We discovered it upon thee!"

"Place the gold plate in his jerkin," said Wat; "and then cast him into the fire!"

The terrible sentence was carried out literally.

Notwithstanding his cries and struggles, the miserable wretch was hurled through an open bay-window, and perished in the flames.

But Liripipe was not the only Dartford rebel destroyed by the burning of the Savoy.

Mark Cleaver, Curthose, Grouthead, Peter Crust, and others, numbering nearly forty persons, found their way to the Duke's well-stored cellars, and, resolving to enjoy themselves, broached a cask of Malmsey, and another of Gascoigne wine.

Though told that the palace was on fire, they heeded not the warning, but continued their carouse; until a great wall fell down, with a tremendous crash, and shut them up completely.

Escape was then impossible, and their comrades did not even attempt to liberate them, but left them to their fate. It may be that the wine they had access to prolonged their wretched existence. For seven days their cries were heard. Then all became silent.

Lambeth Palace, when fired by the rebels, formed a grand object; but it was nothing compared with the burning palace of the Savoy.

Thrice the size of Lambeth, loftier, grander in every respect, and better situated, the Duke of Lancaster's palace, when set on fire by the rebels, could be seen by the whole of London.

The enormous structure burnt throughout the night, and as the flames sometimes rose to a great height, the spectacle, though terrible, was wonderfully fine.

Nothing could have affected the citizens more powerfully than this fire, inasmuch as it proved to them beyond all question that the rebels were not connected, as they had hitherto imagined them to be, with the ambitious John of Gaunt.

Moreover, the burning palace could be seen by the King and his Council in the Tower, and the spectacle affected them, though in a different manner.

Coupled with other events that occurred simultaneously, it made them think that the nobles and gentlemen of England were doomed.

VII.

HOW MESSER BENEDETTO WAS BEHEADED AT THE STANDARD AT CHEAPSIDE.

WHILE the noble Palace of the Savoy was destroyed by one set of the rebels, outrages even more dreadful were committed by the Outlaw and his party.

Newgate had been demolished, and the prisoners liberated; and thus another large band of malefactors was added to the rebel army. Many houses were plundered as the army marched past the Old Change, near St. Paul's, and along Cheapside towards Lombard Street, whither they were bound, and none escaped unless they could prove themselves friends of the insurgents.

Everything was done by the terrified citizens to conciliate the rebels, who were now completely masters of the City. Provision-shops, wine-cellars, and shambles were thrown open. But though the Outlaw did not interdict pillage, he forbade all feasting and carousing till the day's work was done.

As the rebels marched along they stopped every man they met, and thus addressed him: "With whom holdest thou?" If he answered not "With the King and the Commons," they put him to death. Thus carrying terror and destruction with them, they marched to Lombard Street.

It may seem strange that with a Lord Mayor so courageous as Sir William Walworth, and a citizen so valiant as Sir John Philpot, the rebels should be allowed to commit all these dreadful outrages without hindrance; but the loyal citizens were

completely panic-stricken, and thought only of defending their own habitations.

With this design, the wealthier among them got together their friends and as many servants as they could, and strongly barricaded their houses. All the larger habitations were thus converted into fortresses.

Owing to all the armed men being thus employed, the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot found it impossible to get together a sufficient force to attack the rebels with any chance of success. They could not muster three hundred men; and what were these against the enormous host, now increased by all the disaffected citizens, who alone amounted to some twenty thousand?

At that time there were in the City two renowned knights, Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas d'Albreth. Each of them had six score companions, completely armed, and ready to sally forth upon the rebels at any

moment; but they desired to reserve their men for the King, feeling sure he would soon need them.

When Wat Tyler and the rebel leaders crossed London Bridge and entered the City, a consultation took place between the Lord Mayor and these two sagacious and experienced knights, who strongly advised him not to attack the rebels, or the City would be utterly destroyed, but to wait for a favourable opportunity, which could not fail to occur.

Lombard Street, as we have already had occasion to mention, was then almost entirely inhabited by a company of rich Italian merchants, who lent money on usance, and of late had farmed some of the Government taxes, amongst others the obnoxious poll-tax, which had caused the insurrection.

Certain he should obtain a very large

amount of treasure by plundering the houses of these rich Italian merchants, and actuated by a special desire of revenge upon Benedetto, the Outlaw made all haste to Lombard Street.

On hearing of the approach of the rebels, the merchants hastily concealed their chests of treasure and plate in the cellars and other secret places, and carrying with them as much gold as they could, abandoned their houses, and took refuge in the adjoining churches of St. Mary Woolnoth, St. Edmond, and Allhallows, where they hoped they would be safe. Vain expectation!

As the Outlaw turned from Cheapside into Lombard Street, he called out to his followers that he was about to deliver to them the treasures of the Lombard merchants, who had robbed the peasants.

"Go and take all you can find!" he cried. "But from each house I claim ten

thousand marks. The rest is yours, and must be equally divided among you all. We will force the knaves to disclose where their treasure-chests are hidden."

On breaking into the houses, the rebels were surprised to find them deserted, and feared, at first, that the treasure was gone; but they soon discovered where the chests and money-bags were concealed, and lost no time in emptying them; taking care to lay aside the sum required by their leader.

When the houses had been stripped of all the valuables, the Outlaw, with Hothbrand and a large party, went in search of the fugitives, having been informed that they had taken refuge in the adjoining churches.

The unfortunate Benedetto, and two other Italian merchants, were found in the church of St. Mary Woolnoth.

They were at the altar, and the priests,

who were standing before them, menaced the intruders with the thunders of the Church if they dared to touch them.

But the Outlaw, and those with him, were not to be deterred by such threats; and, rushing forward, dragged the victims from the place of sanctuary.

Reading his doom in the Outlaw's terrible looks, the unhappy Benedetto fell at his feet, and besought pity, proffering, at the same time, the bags of gold he had brought away with him.

The Outlaw took the money, but did not relent.

Regarding the kneeling merchant with a stern look, he said—

"This is thy ransom, I trow, which thou hast left unpaid?"

"My ransom was to be a thousand marks," rejoined Benedetto. "Here are ten thousand. Take them, and spare my life."

"I will take the gold, but I cannot spare thee!" rejoined the Outlaw. "Thy name is inscribed on the list of those adjudged to death for grievous wrongs done to the people! I cannot pardon thee if I would! Prepare for instant death! One of these priests will shrive thee!"

"Yet spare me, and I will take thee where more treasure will be found!" implored Benedetto.

The Outlaw hesitated for a moment, and then said, sternly, and resuming his previous inflexible look, "It may not be!"

A priest was then called, and followed the unfortunate merchant as he was dragged away to the Standard at Cheapside, around which a hideous throng was collected.

Several persons having been previously executed there, the steps were slippery with blood.

A stalwart individual, of forbidding ap-

pearance, who acted as executioner, and carried a large two-handed sword on his shoulder, ordered the wretched man to kneel down.

The priest then clambered up to him, and after saying a few words in a low tone, and listening to his response, gave him absolution.

After Benedetto had pressed a crucifix to his lips, the executioner struck off his head; which rolled down to the foot of the steps, and was carried off by the crowd.

END OF BOOK THE FOURTH.

BOOK V.

SMITHFIELD.

I.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

THAT night the Outlaw made his head-quarters in Leadenhall, then a large private mansion, belonging to Sir Hugh Nevil, having flat battlements, coated with lead, whence it derived its name, and a large central court. This hall afterwards became the property of the renowned Richard Whittington.

In Leadenhall, after his sanguinary day's work was over, the Outlaw feasted and caroused with Hothbrand and others of his officers, laughing and jesting over the direful deeds they had done, and planning other deeds, equally direful, for the morrow. And here he stored the vast amount of plunder he had obtained.

The large courtyard of the mansion was filled with armed men, who kept watch during the night.

Armed men were also placed in the adjoining markets; and Gracechurch and Fenchurch Streets were guarded in like manner, for fear of a surprise.

But in Cheapside, where so much slaughter had taken place — for all the merchants had been beheaded at the Standard—thousands of drunken wretches were lying fast asleep, and might have been "killed like flies," as Froissart saith, had any armed men fallen upon them. But none of the loyal citizens dared to leave their houses.

Wat Tyler passed the night in a very different manner. Having resolved upon a separate course of action, he kept aloof from his brother chief.

After witnessing the destruction of the

Savoy, he conducted his division of the army through the lower part of the City, along Thames Street and Tower Street to Tower Hill, where he posted himself, with the design of preventing any assistance from being brought to the King, or any provisions from being introduced into the fortress.

During his march through the City he would not allow pillage. Large supplies were brought by the citizens who were favourable to the cause; and he told his men that these must suffice for the present.

A dreadful night of terror and suspense was passed by those within the beleaguered fortress — all communication with their friends and with the City being now cut off.

From their place of observation, the summit of the White Tower, the King and the Council witnessed the burning of the

Savoy, and they beheld the arrival of Wat Tyler and his host on Tower Hill.

It was now clear that the fortress was to be assaulted on the morrow, and preparations were made for its defence; but it was also clear that the boldest and bravest of the Council, Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort, were not hopeful, having reason to fear the garrison would capitulate.

By the King's command, Sir John Holland had been released from confinement in the Beauchamp Tower, but was not allowed to enter the palace, and was sent to keep guard on the walls.

II.

HOW WAT TYLER ENTERED THE TOWER.

NEXT morning, those who looked from the walls and battlements of the fortress, and from the summit of the donjon, saw the whole of Tower Hill covered with an armed multitude. Terrible to hear were the shouts of these wild-looking men.

After awhile a troop of rebels, bearing a banner of St George, rode down, as near as they dared, to the Bulwark Gate, and, sounding a trumpet, called out that unless the King came out to confer with their leader, they would forthwith attack the fortress, and slay all within it.

This insolent message was repeated to

Richard, and troubled him exceedingly. Summoning a meeting of the Council, he asked their advice, and Sir Simon Burley recommended that he should agree to a conference outside the Bulwark Gate, and, while it took place, they would endeavour to seize the rebel leader, and conveying him into the Tower, instantly put him to death.

The plan being approved, trumpets were blown from the battlements, and notice was given to the rebels that, an hour hence, the King would sally forth, and hold a brief conference with their leader.

A loud shout from the besiegers signified their satisfaction; and, a little time before the interview, a large body of archers moved down towards the Bulwark Gate. They were headed by Wat Tyler, with a body-guard of some two hundred good men-at-arms.

Undeterred by this formidable display,

Richard, fully armed and mounted on a powerful charger, came forth. He was attended by Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir Osbert Montacute, the Baron de Vertain, and De Gommegines—all well mounted and completely armed. In the rear were five score archers.

On seeing the King and his attendants come forth, and noticing that the Bulwark Gate was encumbered by archers and cross-bowmen, Wat Tyler ordered his men to charge, and dashed forward.

At the same time the company of rebels behind gave a loud shout, and pressed on after the horsemen.

Alarmed by the charge, the King instantly turned back, and though Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace tried to stop him, he re-entered the fortress, and they were compelled to follow.

But they were hindered by the men-at-

arms, and before they could get in, Wat Tyler and his men prevented the gate from being closed, the drawbridge raised, and the portcullis lowered.

So quickly and so successfully was the manœuvre accomplished, that within a quarter of an hour after the King's retreat more than two thousand rebels had entered the fortress, and the Tower was taken by Wat Tyler almost without a blow being struck.

The guards at the gates and the men on the battlements were driven away, and replaced by rebels.

Only the upper part of the White Tower was in the hands of the Royalists, and was occupied by Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, and the knights.

In the chapel of the White Tower, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord High Treasurer had taken refuge.

But the rebel leader was content that they should remain shut up there for awhile.

In the palace were the only persons with whom he had to deal—the King, the Princess, and Editha.

III.

WAT TYLER'S PROPOSAL TO THE KING.

SO sudden was the entrance of the rebels into the Tower, and so numerous were they, that the garrison, either from fear, or, as was thought, from a secret understanding with the insurgents, attempted no resistance.

However, the guards stationed at the gates of the palace proved faithful, and refused to admit the rebel leader and those with him; but they were quickly slain.

Dismounting in the courtyard, Wat Tyler, attended by a dozen armed men, entered the palace, and ascertaining from an usher that the King was in the Princess's apartments,

commanded the terrified official to conduct him thither.

As the rebel leader strode along the passage with a proud step, he felt that at length the object of his ambition was gained, and that supreme power was within his reach.

As may be supposed, the palace was in the utmost confusion. Grooms, pages, and yeomen had disappeared. Frightened to death, the Princess's ladies had shut themselves up in their own rooms.

The only person left with the royal lady was Editha. They were together when Richard sought his mother's apartments. The Princess's courage did not forsake her at this trying juncture, but seemed to rise with the occasion; and Editha displayed great spirit.

The King having told them that the Tower was in the hands of the rebels, and

that they might expect an immediate visit from Wat Tyler, they were not surprised when the door was suddenly opened, and the rebel leader marched into the room, leaving his followers outside.

After advancing a few paces, he stopped. His stalwart figure, exaggerated by the armour he wore, his haughty mien, and the exceeding sternness of his looks, combined to give him a very formidable appearance. He made no obeisance to the King or to the Princess, but waited to be addressed.

As Richard remained silent, the Princess, collecting all her energy, said to the insolent intruder—

"How dar'st thou profane this apartment with thy presence?"

"I am here by right of conquest, madam," he replied. "The Tower is in my hands, and I shall enter any room within it I think fit. I have come to make certain

propositions to your son, the King; and I am much mistaken if, having regard to his safety and welfare, you do not counsel him to accede to them."

"State what thou hast to say!" cried Richard, who, by this time, had regained his self-possession.

"First, then, said the rebel leader, haughtily, "let me declare—as, indeed, must be evident—that I alone can maintain thee on the throne! I have now greater power than thine uncle, John of Gaunt, whose palace I yesterday burnt down, or than the Earls of Cambridge and Buckingham. Though I war with the nobles and the knights and with the clergy, I do not seek to dethrone thee, but will uphold thy authority on certain terms."

"State thy terms," said Richard. "I am willing to listen to them."

"That the people may confide in thee,

thou shalt espouse a daughter of the people," rejoined Wat. "That I may confide in thee, thy consort shall be my daughter Editha."

Before Richard could answer, the Princess interposed.

"Editha is not a daughter of the people," she rejoined, boldly. "Neither is she thy daughter!"

"She passeth as such," said Wat Tyler. "That is sufficient."

Then, turning to the King, he added: "Let me have an answer to my proposition, that I may know how to act."

"Ere you reply to this bold man, my liege," said Editha, "suffer me, I pray you, to say a word. I owe him no obedience, and will render him none! Reject his insolent proposition—reject it with scorn! Defy his utmost threats and malice. He dares not raise his hand against your royal per-

son! Should he draw his sword, it shall pierce my breast—not yours!"

The words were uttered with so much energy that Wat Tyler recoiled, and she placed herself between him and the King.

But, in another moment, the rebel leader recovered, and exclaimed, in a furious voice—

"Think not to thwart my purpose, girl! I have planned this marriage, and it *shall* take place, or thou and thy great protectress will rue it, and the King will lose his crown! Who shall oppose my determination?"

"I oppose it not," rejoined Richard.

"Thou dost hear?" cried Wat, triumphantly. "The King agrees. Now wilt thou disobey?"

"I shall never marry!" said Editha.

"Never marry?" exclaimed Richard. "Not if I offer thee my hand?"

"I am wedded to heaven!" she rejoined. "Last night I pronounced the solemn vow at the altar before the Archbishop, in the presence of her Highness!"

"'Tis true!" exclaimed the Princess.

Richard uttered an exclamation of despair.

"Trouble not yourself, my liege," said Wat Tyler. "She shall yet be yours. The Archbishop shall release her from the vow, or I will have his head!"

And he quitted the room, with the evident determination of executing his threat.

"I will stay him!" cried Richard, hurrying to the door.

But he was prevented from going forth by the rebel guard stationed outside.

"I am a prisoner in my own palace?" exclaimed Richard, as he returned, with

alarm depicted in his countenance. "The good Archbishop will be sacrificed!"

"No, my son," rejoined the Princess; "Heaven would not permit so atrocious a deed. The Archbishop is safe in the White Tower."

IV.

HOW THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND THE LORD HIGH TREASURER WERE BEHEADED ON TOWER HILL.

ON quitting the Princess's apartments, Wat Tyler left a guard at the door, as we have stated, giving the men strict injunctions to allow no one—not even the King—to come forth.

Taking another party with him, he began to search the palace, and ere long chanced upon one of the Archbishop's servants, who, being threatened with death, conducted the rebel leader and his men by a secret passage to the chapel in the White Tower, where they found the Archbishop and Sir Robert Hales engaged in prayer.

Mass had just been said, and both had received the Holy Communion. Not knowing what might ensue, the Archbishop had passed the whole of the previous night in devotion. He was now kneeling at the altar, praying and confessing his sins; and Sir Robert was kneeling beside him, when the rebel leader and his men rushed into the chapel.

Alarmed by the noise, the exalted personages looked round, and seeing these savage-looking men armed with pikes and bills, at once surmised their purpose. But they did not quit their kneeling posture.

Rushing up to the Archbishop, who was arrayed in his full ecclesiastical costume, and wore his embroidered dalmatic and alb, and had a black velvet beret on his head, Wat Tyler seized him roughly by the shoulder, and forced him to arise. The Lord Treasurer rose at the same moment.

"What wouldst thou?" demanded the Archbishop.

"Come with me, Simon de Sudbury, and release a young damsel from the vow she made before thee last night, in the presence of the Princess," said Wat.

"I cannot absolve her if I would," said the Archbishop; "and I would not if I could."

"Then thou shalt die!" rejoined Wat Tyler.

"I well know I have no mercy to expect from thee, remorseless villain!" said the Archbishop.

"Thou art right, Simon de Sudbury!" said Wat. "Thou hast long since been doomed to death for thy treason to the people, and I would not have spared thee hadst thou granted my request! Thou also art sentenced to die the death of a traitor!" he added, to Sir Robert Hales, who re-

garded him sternly. "Bring them along!" he added, to his followers.

"Ay, let us go!" said the Archbishop to the Lord Treasurer. "We are both well prepared! It is best to die when there is no longer pleasure in life!"

"I would I could have died in arms!" replied Sir Robert.

Throughout this trying scene, both maintained their customary dignified deportment; and so majestic did they look, that the rebels did not dare to lay hands upon them, as they led them from the chapel.

So expeditiously was the seizure accomplished, that Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort, who were in the upper part of the donjon, were not aware of their removal.

Wat Tyler's first design was to put the Archbishop and the Lord Treasurer to death on the green in front of the chapel of

St. Peter; but he changed his mind, and decided that the executions should take place on the summit of Tower Hill; since John Ball and the greater part of his followers were left there, being unable to enter the fortress.

Accordingly he gave orders that the prisoners should be taken thither; and, mounting his steed, he rode at the head of the escort.

From the summit of the White Tower Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, and the other knights, beheld this melancholy procession. They saw the two dignified prisoners marching in the midst of the rebel guard, and preceded by Wat Tyler on horseback, and a ferocious-looking ruffian, marching on foot, and bearing an axe on his shoulder. But they could not rescue them, since the men-at-arms and the archers refused to act.

From the windows of the palace Richard and his mother, with Editha, likewise witnessed the same dismal spectacle.

They saw the infuriated crowd that followed in the wake, armed with pikes and bills, and heard the dreadful cries of "Death to the traitors! Death to the oppressors of the people!" And they knew what was about to take place.

In this manner the procession passed through the gateway of the Garden Tower, along the lower ward, and out at the Bulwark Gate; and throughout the march, exposed as they were to all sorts of indignities and insults from the vile miscreants who attended them, the two illustrious personages maintained an unaltered deportment.

But they were yet more roughly treated as they toiled up Tower Hill; and the good Archbishop had need of all his for-

titude to pass through this dreadful ordeal. As to the Lord Treasurer, his courage sustained him, and he eyed his tormentors so fiercely that they drew back.

Hitherto no scaffold had been erected on Tower Hill, and indeed no execution had taken place on the spot, subsequently drenched with the best blood in the kingdom.

Stationed on the brow of the hill, John Ball, seated on his mule, had watched the painful march of the victims, and exulted in the indignities to which they were exposed.

As they came slowly on, he rode down to meet the Archbishop, and, addressing him in a scoffing tone, said—

"Simon de Sudbury, thou art welcome to Tower Hill. At length thou wilt reap the reward of thy crimes."

"What have I done that ye desire to

kill me?" demanded the Archbishop. "I have yet to learn mine offence."

"Thou hast deeply wronged the people," replied John Ball, "and they have doomed thee to death. Is it not so, my friends?" he cried, looking around at the infuriated multitude. "Shall he not die?"

"He shall die!" they replied, as with one voice.

"Thou hearest, Simon de Sudbury?" said John Ball. "Thy sentence is pronounced."

"I will not speak farther to thee, apostate," said the Archbishop; "but I will address thy deluded companions. I plead not for life, but I ask what I have done?"

"Thou hast robbed us!" cried a thousand voices.

"Ye are wrong," responded the Archbishop. "I have worked for you; I have

expended my money upon you. Let Canterbury speak for me. Ye know what I have done for that city. I have partly rebuilt it."

"Heed him not," cried John Ball. "He speaks falsely."

"He shall die!" cried the throng, inexorably.

"Hear me, mistaken men," cried the Archbishop, in a voice that awakened attention. "If you kill me, there will come upon you the indignation of the just Avenger. All England will be put under an Interdict."

On this there arose a terrible cry, and as soon as the multitude were in some degree quieted, John Ball said—

"We neither fear Pope Gregory's Interdict nor acknowledge his authority. Thou art a great offender, and justice hath at length overtaken thee. Prepare thyself for *instant death.*"

"I am already prepared," replied the Archbishop, firmly. "I passed the whole of last night in prayer and confession, and when seized by thy lawless chief, I was kneeling at the altar. Mayst thou be as well prepared to meet thy end; and it is not far off! I forgive thee, and may Heaven forgive thee likewise."

To this the Lord Treasurer added, in a terrible voice—

"I have no forgiveness for a wretch like thee, who has forsaken his religion and incited the people to rebellion! My blood will rise to heaven to bear witness against thee. I summon thee to appear at the Judgment Seat within three days."

So awful were the words, that those who heard them looked aghast.

Seeing the effect produced, Wat Tyler, who had kept back to allow John Ball to speak, pushed his horse forward, and ordered the execution to proceed.

During the colloquy previously recounted, a large block had been brought from a neighbouring butcher's shop, and beside it stood the ruffianly headsman, leaning on his axe and scowling at his victims.

Around was gathered a group of fierce-looking men, armed with pikes and gisarmes, and within the circle were Wat Tyler on his steed and the monk on his mule.

Near the captives were half a dozen villanous-looking wretches, appointed to assist the executioner in his task.

First to suffer was the good Archbishop. He looked round at the circle of spectators, but met not a pitying glance.

Howling like so many wolves, they shook their weapons at him; but their fury disturbed him not.

Quietly unfastening the piece of fine linen known as the amice, suspended over

his shoulders, he took it off, and next removed his alb. These were the sole preparations he made.

Then turning to the headsman, he told him he forgave him. The surly caitiff made no response, but signed to him to kneel down.

The Archbishop complied; but before laying his venerable head upon the block, he lifted up his hands to Heaven, and ejaculated, "O, all ye blessed angels and saints, assist me by your prayers!"

Growing impatient at the delay, the executioner forced him down, and then struck at him with the axe; but the blow not proving fatal, the Archbishop slightly raised himself, and, joyfully and with a beatific expression of countenance, exclaimed, "Heaven wills that I should be ranked among the martyrs!"

Not till the seventh stroke was the good man's head severed from the body.

The Lord Treasurer met his fate with the utmost resolution.

Insensible, apparently to the outcries of the spectators, he looked sternly at the two leaders, and then, throwing off his velvet gown and chain, said to the headsman—

"Take those, thou clumsy varlet, and do thy work quickly, if thou canst!"

Satisfied with the gifts, or ashamed of his previous awkwardness, the executioner struck off the Lord Treasurer's head with a single blow.

But the ferocious rebels were not content with these acts of vengeance. Setting the two heads on pikes, they carried them to London Bridge, and fixed them on the City Gate, where the heads of traitors were usually placed.

In order that the head of the Archbishop should be recognised, they nailed his black cap to the skull.

The bodies of the two illustrious victims were left on Tower Hill, and remained there—none daring to remove them—till the following night.

The mutilated remains of the Lord High Treasurer were interred in the Temple; and the good Archbishop, who had won a crown of martyrdom, though he failed to receive it on earth, found a fitting place of sepulture within the choir of Canterbury Cathedral.

When the tomb was accidentally opened a few years since, it was found that a leaden shot occupied the place of the head.

Once a year, in former days, the Mayor and Aldermen of Canterbury used to visit the tomb of the great benefactor of the city, and pray for his soul.

V.

CATHERINE DE COURCY TAKES REFUGE IN DARTFORD PRIORY.

MOUNTED on a powerful charger, and having Catherine de Courcy seated behind him, Conrad quitted Eltham secretly that night, and riding with great swiftness, reached Dartford Priory in less than an hour.

The gates were closed, and some little time elapsed before the old porter could be induced to open them; but at last he yielded to Catherine's supplications, and admitted them into the court.

Though it was now somewhat late, the Prioress, who had not yet retired to rest—*being* engaged in prayer—came to the door

with Sister Eudoxia; and on their appearance Conrad instantly set down his fair charge, and as the light carried by Sister Eudoxia fell upon the features of the newcomer, the Prioress uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I thought it was Editha," she cried.

"No, 'tis I—Catherine de Courcy," replied the other; "I am come to seek refuge with you, holy mother."

"You are welcome, dear Catherine," replied the Prioress, tenderly embracing her. "My thoughts were running upon one for whose preservation I have just been praying."

With a mind greatly relieved at having thus successfully accomplished his object, Conrad departed without a word.

He returned to Eltham without drawing bridle, and entered the palace as secretly as he had quitted it.

A great weight was taken from Sir Lionel's mind when he learnt that his daughter was in safety.

After some converse with the old knight, Conrad was about to retire, when Sir Lionel stopped him.

"I have a plan to propose," he said. "If you agree, it ought to be acted upon forthwith. Are all the men in the garrison rebels?"

"I fear so," replied Conrad; "they have all joined the league."

"Dare you propose to them to return to their allegiance?"

"I will sound some of them to-night, and if I find them favourably disposed, I will muster the whole garrison to-morrow, and march them to London."

Conrad's overtures were so well received by the men he addressed, that he was encouraged to carry out his design.

Next day, at an early hour, he summoned the whole garrison to the courtyard.

Fully armed, and mounted on his charger, and having Sir Lionel beside him, likewise on horseback, he made the men a lengthened address, in which he pointed out to them the certainty of their ultimate destruction if they continued in rebellion, promising them not only pardon, but reward, if they returned to their duty, and proceeded to the King's assistance.

Addressed to willing ears, his arguments prevailed; the promise of pardon and reward being doubtless the main inducement.

Raising a loud shout for the King, and brandishing their weapons, they promised to follow wherever Conrad should lead them.

"Then we will march to London at once!" cried Conrad, determined not to let their newly-aroused loyalty cool. "Follow me!"

"Help to put down the King's enemies, and your misdeeds will be forgotten and forgiven!" cried Sir Lionel.

Once more the echoes of the palace were awakened by loyal shouts, as the late rebels followed Conrad and the old knight across the drawbridge.

Thus was the royal palace, for a time, completely abandoned. But better so than occupied as it had been.

As they rode together along the avenue, Sir Lionel heartily congratulated Conrad on his success.

"I am not surprised at it," said the other. "The men are beginning to get frightened, and are glad to purchase their pardon."

On arriving at Blackheath, at the old knight's suggestion, Conrad called a halt, and, addressing the men, said, "It behoves us to act with the utmost caution. When

we enter London, we must make it appear that we still belong to the rebel party. By such means we shall not be attacked, and shall be the better able to render assistance to the King. We will declare ourselves at the fitting moment. Await the signal from me."

Promising attention to order, the men continued the march.

As they approached Southwark, the numerous desolated and half-burnt mansions showed them the havoc committed by their former comrades; and so sad was the spectacle, that it excited feelings of compassion even in their rugged breasts.

Before crossing London Bridge, Conrad again halted to make inquiries, and the information obtained determined him to proceed at once to Tower Hill.

Ere this the heads of the Archbishop and the Lord Treasurer had been fixed on the

City gate, and the sight so enraged Conrad and Sir Lionel, that, unable to control themselves, they dispersed the crowd, who were gazing at the relics.

VI.

HOW THE OUTLAW WAS SLAIN BY CONRAD BASSET; AND HOW CONRAD WAS KNIGHTED BY THE KING.

NEVER was London the scene of so many strange and terrible events as at the period of our tale.

While two of England's wisest and best sons were butchered on Tower Hill, an effort, that proved successful, was made by the royal party to drive out the rebels left within the fortress, when Wat Tyler quitted it to witness the executions.

Owing to the treasonable apathy of the archers and men-at-arms constituting the garrison, Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, and all the knights and esquires, had been unable to prevent the entrance of

Wat Tyler into the fortress, and were compelled to remain in the upper part of the donjon until the rebel leader had taken his victims to Tower Hill.

They then ventured forth, and, making their way to the stables without being discovered, mounted their steeds. While they were collecting all the men-at-arms they could, they were joined by the King, who was so transported with fury that he insisted on leading the attack on the rebels; and, springing on his steed, and snatching a lance from an esquire, he dashed forth, calling upon the others to follow him, and charged the rebels who were left in the upper ward.

Taken completely by surprise, and unable to resist the attack, they fled, and numbers were ridden down and slain by the knights, but the majority ran swiftly along the lower ward, and escaped by the gates.

Excited by the pursuit, and burning to

avenge himself of the insults he had received from Wat Tyler, Richard imprudently followed them beyond the Bulwark Gate.

In vain his followers called to him to stop; he rushed madly on for more than two hundred yards, and only drew up when he perceived a very formidable-looking personage, mounted on a black steed, dashing towards him at a headlong pace, sword in hand, with the evident design of capturing or slaying him.

Then he stopped, but it was too late.

Ere he could turn and fly, the fierce-looking horseman, who had descried him at a distance, was upon him.

The terrible assailant with whom the young King had to deal, though he knew him not, was the Outlaw.

Not many minutes previously the redoubted rebel leader had appeared, with a certain portion of his followers, on Tower

Hill, and, perceiving that a great number of insurgents were flying from the fortress, he galloped down towards the Bulwark Gate, to ascertain the cause.

Long before he got there the King appeared, and the chance of capturing the young monarch, whom he instantly recognised, made him quicken his pace.

Dashing up to Richard, and seizing his bridle, he called out, in a threatening voice—

"Yield thee amy prisoner!"

"Away, villain!" cried Richard, authoritatively. "Knowest thou not I am the King?"

To his surprise, however, his assailant did not relinquish his hold, but replied, in an insolent tone—

"I know it! Nevertheless thou art my prisoner!"

But assistance was at hand.

Just at the very nick of time Conrad Basset appeared.

A few minutes previously he had entered Tower Hill, and was riding along at the head of his men, with Sir Lionel by his side, when he perceived the King's danger.

Drawing his sword, he dashed forward, and called out—

"Release his Majesty instantly, villain, or——"

"What meanest thou, Conrad?" cried the Outlaw, without releasing his hold.

"Defend thyself, villain!" rejoined Conrad.

No longer doubting what was meant, the Outlaw released his hold of the King, who started off to a short distance, but then stopped, being desirous to see the end of the encounter.

"Thou art a false traitor, Conrad!" cried the Outlaw.

"'Tis thou who art the traitor!" rejoined the other. "I am the avenger!"

A brief, but terrible, conflict then ensued, regarded with fearful interest by the King—regarded, also, with fearful interest by hundreds of other spectators; but it resulted in the death of the Outlaw, whose throat being pierced by Conrad's sword, fell backwards from his steed, exclaiming, with his latest breath, "Curses on thee, traitor! Thou hast robbed me of the crown!"

Meanwhile Sir Lionel de Courcy had joined the King, and in consequence of the explanation he was able to give his Majesty, Sir Simon Burley and the others, Conrad was invited to enter the fortress, and bring the whole of his men with him.

Nothing passed between the King and the young man till they reached the inner ward.

Richard then drew his sword, and in the presence of all his nobles dubbed his deliverer knight.

VII.

THE KING AGREES TO HOLD A FINAL CONFERENCE WITH WAT TYLER AT SMITHFIELD.

FROM the brow of Tower Hill Wat Tyler witnessed the deliverance of the King, and the subsequent death of the Outlaw by the hand of Conrad Basset.

Though astounded and enraged that Conrad had gone over to the royal party, Wat Tyler almost forgave him for his desertion, since he had freed him from the only person able to compete with him for sovereign power. From John Ball he dreaded no opposition; but he had felt that a deadly quarrel must speedily arise between himself

and the Outlaw. This difficulty was now removed.

Feigning, however, deep regret at the death of his brother chief, and vowing dire revenge, he caused the body to be conveyed to Leadenhall, and shortly afterwards followed it thither, to take possession of the Outlaw's treasure.

Before his departure he left a very large body of men—numbering nearly thirty thousand—on Tower Hill, under the command of Hothbrand, to prevent any supplies from being received by the besieged, and also to check any attempt on their part to sally forth.

John Ball accompanied him to Leadenhall, where they had a long consultation together as to the next step to be taken.

As Wat Tyler now despaired of carrying out his ambitious project in regard to Editha, he resolved to seize upon the young King,

since he could then pass such measures as he pleased in the name of his royal prisoner.

To besiege the Tower, now that the garrison was increased by the men brought from Eltham, would be a work of time. To enter the fortress by stratagem would be difficult.

By the advice of John Ball, he ordered Hothbrand to make a proclamation, inviting Richard to meet him on the following day at Smithfield, where they could hold a conference, and the King could hear the demands of the Commons. A solemn pledge on the part of Wat Tyler was likewise to be given, that no harm would be done to the King or his attendants; but this promise was not meant to be kept, Wat Tyler's real intention being to seize upon the young monarch and slay his attendants.

Notice of the proclamation was brought to the King, who had with him at the time

Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir John de Newtoun, Sir Lionel de Courcy, and the young knight, Sir Conrad Basset. The two members of the Council at once decided that his Majesty ought not to attend the proposed conference.

"'Tis a stratagem on the part of this daring rebel to get you into his power, my liege," said Sir Simon. "If you quit the Tower, you will never return."

"But I shall be guarded by the Lord Mayor, Sir John Philpot, and all the valiant and loyal citizens," replied Richard. "Moreover, I can count upon Sir Robert Knolles, Sir Perducas d'Albreth, and their companies."

"That Wat Tyler meditates some treachery I nothing doubt, my liege," observed Sir Conrad Basset; "but he shall never accomplish his design. Your Majesty may attend the conference without fear. I will

slay him, as I slew his brother chief. With his death the rebellion will be ended, since no one can take his place."

"Sir Conrad is right," said Sir Lionel. "Your Majesty will be in no danger, and the opportunity of getting rid of this powerful rebel ought not to be neglected."

"The plan promises well, but the risk is too great," observed Sir Eustace.

"The risk will be mine," said Sir Conrad; "but I will gladly sacrifice my life if I can deliver his Majesty from this thraldom, and enable him to recover the sovereignty of the realm, which he hath well-nigh lost."

"You will not deliver me alone," said Richard, "but thousands of my loyal subjects, whose lives and property are menaced by this villain and his robber host. My lords, I will attend the conference at Smithfield."

No further opposition was offered by the

two members of the Council; for though they had not changed their opinion as to the extreme hazard of the plan, they hoped for success.

Accordingly a trumpet was sounded, and proclamation was made that at noon on the following day the King would proceed to Smithfield to hold a conference with the insurgent leader, and would be prepared to assent to all the just demands of the Commons.

When this answer was brought to Wat Tyler and the monk, who were feasting at Leadenhall, the latter exclaimed, "'Tis well! We shall take him as easily as a fowler snareth a bird!"

VIII.

WAT TYLER IS AGAIN WARNED BY FATHER GAWEN.

NEXT morning preparations were made for that meeting, on the issue of which depended the continuance of the monarchy of England. The nobles and clergy were already doomed to extermination by the rebels. Whether the young King would share their fate, a few hours would decide. Wat Tyler firmly believed if the throne became vacant, he was destined to mount it.

The Royalists were under a like impression. In their opinion, the decisive moment of the conflict between the Nobles and the Commons had arrived. Either they must crush the rebel leader, or he would crush

them. Wat Tyler must never leave the place of meeting alive. Such was their firm resolve.

Strange to say, the rebel leader had such reliance on fortune, that he felt sure he should come away unharmed and triumphant.

Clad in a complete suit of chain mail, over which he wore a surcoat embroidered with the royal badge, and mounted on a superbly-trapped charger, Richard, escorted by Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir Conrad Basset, De Gommegines, De Vertain, and other knights and barons, quitted the Tower, uncertain whether he should ever return to it.

Among those with the King was his brother, Sir John Holland, but the haughty young noble kept aloof from the others, and rode with Sir Osbert Montacute.

The band of former rebels brought from

Eltham, whose fidelity could now be relied upon, were left in charge of the Tower, under the command of the Lieutenant and Sir Lionel de Courcy.

The battlements and towers were covered with archers and cross-bowmen, and the gates were instantly closed as soon as the royal party had passed.

All the rebels, however, had by this time quitted Tower Hill for Smithfield.

Smithfield, at the period of our history, was a large plain at the back of the Tower, overlooked by the eastern walls of the city. It was approached from Aldgate and by a postern gate from Tower Hill.

On this broad and level field, admirably adapted for the purpose, tilts and tournaments on a magnificent scale were frequently held, and judicial combats and duels decided.

Here, in 1374, splendid jousts were exhi-

bited for seven days by Edward III., in honour of his favourite, the beautiful Alice Perrers, who was conducted thither by the infatuated monarch in a gorgeous car, followed by a train of knights and damsels mounted on chargers and palfreys.

Such displays were now past, and Smithfield, instead of being the scene of knightly encounters and royal magnificence, was covered by thousands of insurgents, whose intention was to plunder all the wealthy burgesses, and then setting fire to the City in four places, burn it down.

From St. Botolph's to the Minories Cross, near which stood a convent of poor nuns of the order of St. Clare, and extending thence to the eastern verge of the plain, was drawn up the entire insurgent force, numbering, as we have more than once explained, nearly a hundred thousand men. The foremost ranks were occupied by archers and cross-bowmen,

the rest of the host being armed with pikes, poleaxes, bills, glaives, glavelots, and gisarmes.

None were mounted except Wat Tyler, Hothbrand, and John Ball—the two former on chargers, the latter on his mule.

Wat Tyler wore a coiffe de mailles, with a bunch of horse-hair depending from it, a gorget and breast-plate, and was armed with dagger, and a short, broad-bladed sword.

John Ball was habited in his grey monastic garb, and his hood being thrown back, fully displayed his countenance, which had an almost demoniacal expression.

Wat Tyler was riding slowly past the front line, thinking that such a host must prove invincible, when he perceived a friar approaching, accompanied by a woman.

Instantly recognising Father Gawen and his wife, he was about to order them away;

but an impulse he could not control, induced him to receive them.

"What wouldst though with me?" he said, in a stern tone, to the hermit, as they came up.

"I am come once more to warn thee —and for the last time!" replied the friar.

"I despise thy warnings!" said Wat Tyler. "Thou art a false prophet—a dreamer of idle dreams! Seest thou not I am lord and master of this great city? Even now the King is coming unto me to make terms!"

"Thou thinkest to catch him in thy toils," rejoined the hermit; "but thou thyself shalt be snared and taken!"

"Hast thou heard aught?" demanded Wat Tyler, regarding him fixedly.

"What I have heard has been declared to me—but not by man!" rejoined the

hermit, solemnly. "Depart at once, or thou wilt surely perish!"

"Now I know thee, treacherous friar!" cried Wat. "Thou art hired to come hither with this lying tale! Thou wouldst save the King!"

"I would save thee, unbeliever!" rejoined the hermit, angrily. "But perish in thy pride!"

"Time was when thou wouldst listen to me, Wat!" cried his wife. "Turn not a deaf ear now! Seek safety in instant flight!"

"Begone, woman! I know thee not!" cried Wat. "Hark! yonder is the King! Begone! or both of you shall be driven hence!"

"Farewell for ever, barbarous man!" cried his dame. "Thou deservest thy fate!"

And she departed with the hermit.

But when she got to St. Botolph's Church,

she stopped, and would have tarried there to witness the approaching interview, had not the hermit forced her away, saying, "The ight is not fit for thee, woman!"

IX.

THE FATE OF THE REBEL LEADER.

AT the postern-gate, leading from Tower Hill to Smithfield, Richard found the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot waiting for him, with six score men-at-arms.

Both were armed from head to heel—the former in plate armour, the latter in chain mail. Sir William Walworth had a mace at his saddle-bow, and a long dagger in his girdle. Sir John Philpot had sword, shield, and battle-axe.

"Are these all the men-at-arms you can muster, Sir William?" inquired the King, looking at him reproachfully.

"My liege," replied the Lord Mayor, "all

the loyal citizens have got their friends and servants shut up with them in their houses; but they are prepared to sally forth instantly, and hasten to Smithfield, should the alarm be given. Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas d'Albreth will each bring six score good companions. In this way I doubt not we shall be able to muster some five or six thousand valiant men."

"That will suffice," replied Richard.

He then told the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot the plan formed to put the rebel leader to death.

"I am glad your Majesty has mentioned the design to me," observed the Lord Mayor. "I will send messengers instantly to Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas, and all the principal citizens, to come forth at once with their men, and wait on Tower Hill, so that they can enter by the postern when they hear the alarm."

On entering Smithfield, Richard and his attendants were astounded at the sight of the immense host drawn up on the other side of the plain.

Presently the royal party came to a halt, and the King, having previously arranged his plans, moved forward to a short distance, attended only by Sir John de Newtoun, whom he sent to intimate to the rebel leader that he was ready to confer with him.

Having delivered the message, Sir John rode back; but it soon became evident, by the slowness of his proceedings, that the insolent rebel was resolved to make the King wait. Sir John therefore went again to him, and, in an authoritative tone, bade him make haste.

"When I am at leisure I will come to the King," he repeated. "An thou troublest me, I will not come at all."

Afraid of defeating his plan if he offended him, Sir John again retired.

After another delay, the daring rebel rode slowly forward, and planted himself haughtily in front of the King.

"Why dost thou not make an obeisance to his Majesty, presumptuous varlet?" cried Sir John, highly incensed.

"I will not parley with the King at all while thou art near," said Wat.

"Leave us," rejoined Richard, making a covert sign to him.

Thereupon the knight withdrew, but, with the Lord Mayor and Sir Conrad Basset, kept a watchful eye upon the rebel leader.

"Now let me hear thy demands without more ado," said Richard, scarcely able to tolerate the rebel leader's insolence, and eager to put an end to the scene.

"These are the demands which I make in the name of the Commons, of whom I am

the chief," replied Wat Tyler, pausing between each proposition: "Entire exemption from slavery and serfdom. Partition of lands among the peasantry. Utter abolishment of nobles and clergy." Richard could not repress a slight exclamation, but Wat Tyler went on: "Destruction of imposts. Free right of chase to all."

"Much thou dost ask may be granted," said Richard. "But I must consult with my Council."

"Thy decision must be made at once," rejoined Wat Tyler. "It must be yea or nay! I will never lay down arms till all existing laws are abolished, and all legislators placed at my disposal. Hear me, O King!" he added, with extraordinary arrogance. "There shall be no other laws in England than those that proceed from my mouth!"

Richard regarded him with astonishment,

marvelling at his pride, but he made no remark.

After a pause, Wat Tyler added, "I have a proposal to make to thee, O King! 'Tis this. Let us divide the realm between us. Less than half will not satisfy my ambition. How sayst thou? Dost thou assent? 'Tis a liberal offer, methinks, from one who can take all."

"And thou dost deem thou canst take all?" observed Richard, in a sceptical tone.

"I am sure of it!" replied Wat Tyler, drawing his sword, and playing with it.

He had resolved to kill the King, but was so much awed by Richard's majestic demeanour, that he hesitated to strike the fatal blow.

The hesitation saved Richard, and allowed him to make a sign to the Lord Mayor, who was nearest to him.

Remarking the gesture, Sir William Wal-

worth immediately rode up, keeping his hand upon his dagger, ready to strike.

"Ha!" cried Wat Tyler, fiercely; "why dost thou break upon our conference? Thou wert not summoned."

"It is not fit thou shouldst be alone with the King, thou treacherous villain!" cried the Lord Mayor, indignantly. "Had I his Majesty's commands, I would slay thee."

"'Tis ye who harbour traitors!" exclaimed Wat. "Ye have one with ye now, who has broken his oath to the league, and repaid my favours to him with the basest ingratitude. Let him come forward and speak with me."

Glad of the opportunity of summoning him, the Lord Mayor called to Sir Conrad, who immediately rode forward and confronted his former leader.

"Ha, traitor! ha, villain!" exclaimed Wat, furiously. "Darest thou look me in

the face, after thy perfidy and deceitfulness? Deliver up thy sword to me, base ingrate! By St. Dunstan, I will never eat till I have thy head!"

Carried away by passion, he dashed suddenly forward, and would have struck Sir Conrad with his sword, if the Lord Mayor had not dealt the infuriated wretch a terrible blow with his dagger just below the gorget.

Though mortally wounded by the stroke, Wat Tyler turned and tried to regain his followers; but he was quickly overtaken by Sir Conrad, who dragged him from his horse and instantly despatched him.

At this spectacle, Hothbrand called out, in a loud voice, "Comrades, see ye not they have treacherously slain our leader?"

Upon this tremendous cries of "Vengeance!" arose from the insurgent ranks;

and the archers nocked their shafts, and prepared to shoot the King and his attendants.

But at that moment of extreme peril, when his life was in jeopardy and his kingdom trembled in the balance, Richard displayed a courage worthy of his valiant sire.

Without a moment's hesitation, he rode fearlessly towards the rebels, and with a look of majesty that impressed all who beheld him, he called out, in a loud, clear voice—

"What would you do, my friends? Would you spill the blood of your King because you have lost your leader. Lament not the death of a traitor and a ribald. I will be your leader. Follow me, and you shall have whatsoever you require."

Such was the effect of this address, delivered with wonderful spirit, that the

archers and cross-bowmen forbore to shoot, and the men consulted each other by glances.

Seeing that they wavered, and feeling that all was lost unless he made an instantaneous effort, John Ball rode forward on his mule, and with the looks and gestures of a demoniac, called out—

"Listen not to him! He will beguile you with enticing words and false promises to your destruction. He is now in your power. Slay him, and avenge your fallen leader!"

Further speech was not allowed him. His skull was cleft in twain by Sir John Philpot, who dashed up at the instant, and the apostate monk fell to the ground from his mule.

Enraged by the fall of their second leader, the men once more called out, "Vengeance!" and exclaiming, "Let us

kill them all!" again bent their bows, when loud shouts at the other side of the field announced that assistance was at hand.

While the King was courageously addressing the rebels, Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace Valletort galloped off to summon assistance.

In another instant Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas d'Albreth rode through the postern-gate, each at the head of six score archers.

They were immediately followed by a corps of two thousand well-armed and well-mounted citizens, who shouted lustily as they came upon the field; and it was this shout that struck terror into the rebels.

Demoralized by the death of Wat Tyler, who alone could lead them, the insurgents offered no determined resistance, and when they were charged by the redoubted knights

and their hardy companions, who smote them with their spears, and trampled them beneath their horses' feet, slaying many hundreds, they threw down their arms and fled.

Hothbrand was killed in the first charge.

Next came the armed citizens, burning for vengeance. They completed the rout of the rebels, driving them into the open fields, and chasing them in every direction like wild beasts.

Multitudes were put to the sword, no quarter being given, no prisoners made.

So rapidly and so effectively was the work done, that in less than two hours after the death of the rebel leader the insurrection he had kindled, and which threatened with extermination all the nobles and gentlemen of England, was at an end.

Sought for amid the heaps of slain in Smithfield, the bodies of Wat Tyler and

John Ball were recovered and conveyed to the Hospital of St. Bartholomew.

Subsequently their heads were stricken off, and replaced those of the martyred Simon de Sudbury and the Lord Treasurer on the spikes of London Bridge.

X.

AN EARLY GRAVE.

AFTER the rout of the rebels, Richard proceeded to St. Paul's, to offer up thanks to Heaven for the great deliverance given him.

Accompanied by the Council, the Lord Mayor, Sir John Philpot, Sir John de Newtoun, Sir Conrad Basset, and others, he rode slowly along Aldgate, Cornhill, and Cheapside, everywhere receiving the most enthusiastic demonstrations of loyalty and devotion from the citizens.

None who had openly favoured the rebel cause now dared to show themselves. Richard, however, caused a proclamation to be made at the Standard in Cheapside that

all citizens who returned forthwith to their duty should be pardoned.

But, though joyous shouts rent the air, the aspect of the city was very melancholy. Houses, halls, and monasteries burnt and demolished met the eye at every turn. Many of the small streets were encumbered with ruins, or filled with goods that could not be carried off.

London, indeed, looked like a city that had been sacked during a siege. The enemy had been driven off, but the frightful havoc committed could be discerned on all sides.

It was impossible at that moment to estimate the damage done. But no one doubted it must be enormous.

But there were other sights even more painful than houses burnt and destroyed. Headless trunks were lying unburied in the streets, and great numbers of priests, monks,

and nuns were wandering about without shelter.

Profoundly touched by the sight, Richard spoke to the Lord Mayor, who promised that places of refuge should immediately be found for these unfortunate persons.

After hearing mass in St. Paul's, which was thronged with the citizens, Richard proceeded to the Tower.

As soon as he had dismounted, he repaired to his mother's apartments, and took with him Sir Eustace de Valletort. He found her alone with Editha.

Ever since his departure they had been praying for him.

From his joyful looks, the Princess knew he had been successful, and flying towards him, she clasped him to her breast, exclaiming—

"Ah, fair son! how much I have endured on your account! I thought I should have

died! But my anxiety is all over now that I behold you again, in safety, and triumphant over your enemies!"

"Heaven has answered your prayers, madam!" replied Richard, raising his eyes upwards. "My kingdom is saved. The rebels are completely discomfited, and their leaders slain!"

For a few moments there was a deep silence, during which the Princess and Editha breathed an earnest prayer.

"You say that all the leaders are slain, my son?" inquired the Princess.

"All, madam," he replied; "I am completely delivered from my enemies."

"May your reign never again be disturbed by tumults and rebellions, sire!" exclaimed Editha, fervently.

"'Tis too much to hope and expect," cried the Princess; "but may all plots and dangerous designs be defeated!"

"Madam," said Editha, with a look of sadness, "I will now ask your gracious permission to retire to Dartford Priory."

"Nay; you are too young to retire to a convent," interrupted the King.

"I shall be happier there, my liege," she replied, with a melancholy smile.

"But you have seen nothing but danger and strife," cried Richard. "You know nothing of the pleasures and amusements of a Court. At present you are depressed. When you have recovered your spirits you will think differently."

She shook her head gently, but made no reply.

"Remain, I entreat you, till these terrible events are effaced from your memory!" he cried, almost in an imploring tone. "Then, if you wish, you shall depart."

"My liege," she said firmly, but sadly,

"my resolution is taken. I have done with the world."

Richard looked at her earnestly—entreatingly—but seeing no change in her countenance, he said to the Princess—

"Use your influence with her, I pray you, madam!"

"'Tis best she should go," rejoined the Princess.

Richard uttered an exclamation of despair.

"Do you not approve of my decision?" said the Princess, in a low tone, to Sir Eustace de Valletort, who had been a deeply interested observer of the scene.

"Entirely, madam," he replied.

"I have need of repose after this terrible turmoil," said the Princess, "and shall remain for some little time in seclusion. The Tower awakens too many painful memories. Order the barge, I pray you, to be pre-

pared at once, to conduct us to Dartford Priory,"

"It may be proper to inform your Highness," said the knight, "that Sir Lionel de Courcy and Sir Conrad Basset are about to set out for Dartford Priory, where the Lady Catherine de Courcy has taken refuge."

"Say you so?" cried the Princess. "Then bid them attend me in the barge. I shall be glad of their escort."

Sir Eustace bowed, and departed on his errand.

For the last few minutes Richard had looked like one stupefied. Turning sharply round, he said—

"Will you leave me, Editha?"

"She is going with me, my son," replied the Princess. "Do not oppose her departure."

And, taking a hand cold as marble, she drew the poor damsel from the room.

One look back at the King—the last.

She never beheld him more.

In less than a month afterwards she was lying in the secluded graveyard of Dartford Priory.

Sister Eudoxia and the Prioress prayed daily beside that early grave.

Almost simultaneously with the sad event just recorded the marriage of Conrad Basset and the lovely Catherine de Courcy took place at Canterbury Cathedral.

The valiant young knight subsequently rose high in the King's favour, and Catherine became the fairest ornament of the Court of Anne of Bohemia.

THE END.

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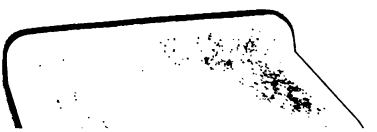
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